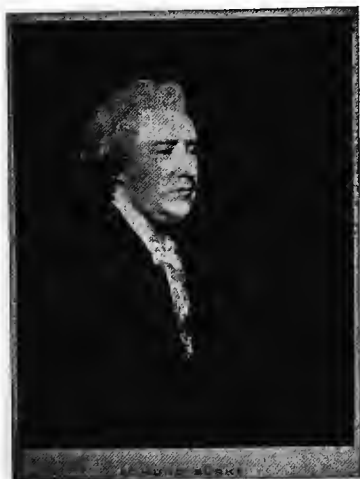




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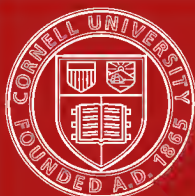
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DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

BY

K. F. PURDON

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DUBLIN TENEMENTS.

These were the homes of those who pushed aside
The broken children of a sweeter race :
These are the cast-off garments of their pride
Because of whom a thousand heroes died :
Alien and sinister, these hold their place.

The light has died upon the pavements grey,
From shattered window and from blackened door
Where, in a sunny, heartless yesterday
Silken and jewelled beauty was at play,
Stare out the hopeless faces of the poor.

Oh, dark inheritors, who hither came,
The flotsam of that splendid brazen sea,
For taint on this your heirship ours the blame,
The shame that clouds your beauty is our shame,
On us and on our children it shall be.

You punish us with gifts. We brought defeat,
And stained with folly any grace we gave.
Our bauble gift that frothed upon the street
In artful silks and laces, you repeat
In foam of lovely childhood, wave on wave

That surges all about the grimy walls,
That frolics round the doorways' evil gloom :
If heaven can smile above these ruined halls,
The light that crowns this shining wave recalls
The heaven that gave to Eden flowers their bloom.

Ah, must the story of our time record
The buds we mired and trampled in the sod?
Are these grey dwellings, shutting out the Lord,
The fairest nursery we could afford
For such bright blossoms of the Tree of God?

SUSAN L. MITCHELL.

DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST DOORSTEP

DINNY DORAN had no mother ; or rather, to speak more accurately, none that he could remember. Misfortune had robbed him of that natural protector, at an extremely early stage of his career, something after the following fashion :

Mrs. Doran, his mother, made out the cause, among other efforts, by doing an odd job of cleaning and so on, whenever such a chance presented itself. And she was just finishing a morning's work, of weekly recurrence, by scrubbing to immaculate purity the doorsteps of a handsome big house, in a handsome big Dublin square, when the master thereof came majestically forth for *his* morning's work, with that air of approving contentment that often follows upon a hearty meal. He himself was big and handsome too ; " a fine appearance of a man, God bless him !" Mrs. Doran considered, " and wid money to burn, and mightn't mind the doctorin' at all, by what the people do be sayin' . . ." He had a kind heart, too, this Dr. Brabazon ; so that when he had glanced with the professional eye that had become second nature at his charwoman, as she hastily pulled aside her

frayed skirts to admit the passing of his resplendent boots, he said very decidedly, " You'd better not wait to finish there ! Get back home at once ! And take a cab ; here . . . ! "

Therewith he handed Mrs. Doran some loose silver, warm from his comfortable pocket, to pay for that extraordinary luxury. Then he stepped, stately and leisurely, into his waiting motor, and was borne swiftly away, to a running accompaniment from Mrs. Doran of " Well, well ! and may the Lord above reward ye, and that the blessing of God may be about yer Honour, and shine down upon you and yours, Amen I pray ! Take a cab ? To be sure an' I will, why not ! "

All the same, and in spite of this asseveration, she thriftily hoisted herself into a passing tram, and so reached " home."

This was a very large room on the first floor of the great empty house of which Mrs. Doran was care-taker ; in virtue of which office she lived rent-free. It had once been a very magnificent mansion indeed ; although it scarcely justified Mrs. Doran's encomiums, to the effect that " you could steal the Doctor's house beyant in the Square out of this one, and never miss it ! " The rooms were very stately. Noble beings had dwelt within them ; had flourished in splendid gaiety there ; had danced and sung, had feasted and drunk deep ; had loved and hated and worked and schemed and otherwise played their various parts, as if they were to go on for ever there. And then the end had come, and each in turn had made final exit over the door-step which Mrs. Doran was now to cross.

But the tide of fashion had ebbed away from that quarter of the city, and had left the great house stranded, forlorn of its former splendour. Nothing now remained to the old mansion of its original state-*liness*, save a few vague traditions, and time-defaced relics, such as would scarcely be perceptible, even to the eye of an expert.

Why, even the radiant winged creatures that used to look down with such smiling indifference from painted ceilings upon the surging life below them were distinguishable now only to an imagination vivid enough to re-construct them from behind obscuring smoke and grime ; and just as well ! What pleasure could such bright beings find in the contemplation of the Doran *ménage*, which was merely a few morsels of the human flotsam and jetsam of the city that had been grudgingly permitted to share the shelter of the old house with cobwebs, dust, rats and smells ? And except for a gaunt bed, and an empty box or two, with a few very brilliantly coloured sacred pictures ; such as the Mother with the Seven Swords piercing her heart, and the Christ bearing forth His Cross, little else was perceptible in the room to which Mrs. Doran was making her slow way.

Well yes, there was something else ! A little girl was standing by the window looking down into the street ; Mrs. Doran's little daughter, Brigit, commonly called Brigeen or Bride for short. Her mother had left her there, locked into the room for safety, when she had gone forth that morning to her work.

Mrs. Doran now dropped upon the side of the bed, and let her gaze fall listlessly upon the grate. It was

empty ; the bars were red with rust ; a heap of white ashes lay beneath. The marble chimney-piece, once dazzling white, was dirty and stained now beyond grace of any cleaning. On it there lay an old prayer-book and a string of beads. At one end, hung a wonderfully carved head of a nymph, flower-crowned and laughing, as if innocently amused at her own absurd position ; for she was clinging there upside down. This was because Brigeen had solaced many a lonely hour of her mother's careful imprisoning, by trying to take the stone lady down, to make a dolly of her. But these efforts had been only partially successful, thanks to the honest old craftsmanship, and very fortunately for the nymph and Brigit's toes.

" If a body could even get a supeen of tea ! " said Mrs. Doran, half aloud, " but sure there's not as much coal in the place as ud blind the eye of a bee ! See here, Brigeen alannah, let you run off to Byrne's at the corner, for a loaf, and see would they send in to the bar next door for a bottle of porter, the way you can be bringin' it back here to me, sure, the very same as if you could be going in yourself for it only you'll not be let, those times . . . and make no delay, acushla ; see, here's the money for them ! " and she produced a few coppers from some hidden pocket.

As soon as the child was gone, Mrs. Doran went to a corner of the room, lifted a loose board, and put her hand in underneath it. Her face fell ; she turned white to her lips ; then groped further. No result.

" Och, God help us, the money's gone ! " she said ; " all I had saved to put me over the bout ! And I'd have had whips, with what the Doctor is after giving me, God bless him ! All the little things

a body does want ! If only I'd spent it before . . ! What will I do at all at all ! Not a haporth in the place, and Himself without a penny to his name either . . . "

She went back to her seat upon the bedside, and rocked herself there forlornly, till her little daughter came back.

" Brigeen ! " said she then, " was there anyone in here while I was out this morning ? But sure, how could there, and I after locking the door ? But I had some money hid beyant there in the corner, and now its gone ' on ' me ! And too sure I am that your father didn't know a word about it ! What will I do at all at all ! What can have happened to it ! "

She said this more to give vent to her distress than with any expectation of finding out what had happened her hoard. But little Bride grew red, a guilty red ; then lifted up her voice and wept, in sympathy with her mother's grief over a loss, the importance of which she did not in the least understand. After all, it didn't matter ; but Mrs. Doran couldn't foresee this.

" Och ! and was it you that took it, you thief of the world ! " said Mrs. Doran, feebly indignant, " what came over ye, to go do the like ! But sure it can't be that it's all gone ! That couldn't be. Get what's left of it for me, and I'll say no more about it ! Get it quick, like a good child ! "

" Sure how can I ! " said Brigeen, crying vain tears ; and then this modern young Eve proceeded to shift the blame from her own shoulders by saying, " and it isn't me that's to be blemt that it's all gone ! Tim Carty that done that ; seen me at the windy and me playing jack-stones wid it, and says he to me for I

to throw it down to him the way he could be buying sweets off of Mrs. Molally that he seen on her way here, and he could be pushing a share of them in to me under the door . . . and . . ."

"I wouldn't doubt the same Tim! There's no villainy I'd put past that lad. But old Rose Molally should know better, that I'm acquainted wid since . . . I had a better opinion of her . . . but sure how was she to know where he got the money? But she might guess it was someways not right, all that money for sweeties!"

"Sure he hadn't hardly any left to spend wid her, and he after losing the weight of it, playing pitch and toss wid some other lads, afore she came in sight at all," Brigit explained, with a fresh burst of tears at the remembrance of her own deprivation, "he got noan wort' while . . ."

"Well, the Lord ull have to forgive Tim Carty that turn and for putting such villainy into your head, for I can't nor it isn't to be expected that I would. I'd lambaste him and you too, this instant minute, only for I not being able. But let the two of you wait, only wait till yer father is home, and see if he won't regulate yiz, and . . ."

Brigit received these threats with an equanimity that reflected little credit on her mother's habitual accuracy of speech. She been indifferently breaking off morsels of the loaf she had brought back from the shop, and swallowing them with a healthy enjoyment. Her appetite was in no way impaired by what had occurred. She even drank off the porter that Mrs. Doran declared herself unable to swallow.

The fumes of the strong drink mounted into the

little girl's head. She fell asleep on one of the boxes already mentioned, and did not waken for some hours. Then she became gradually aware of a loud knocking downstairs, and a strangely altered voice called to her from the shadows that had gathered round the bed, "There's yer father, at long last, and he thumping to get in, on the door ; it's what it must have slapped-to, after you coming in, Bride. And who's to open it now, I wonder ! Let you be telling him down through the windy for he to not make any delay only be off to get someone from the hospital . . . maybe by the time he's back from there I'll be able to open the door below meself. . . . "

Brigit ran to the window, and having given her message, crouched again upon her box, lonely and frightened. Her father had gone off at once, with a "Glory be to God !"

It was quite dark now. There was no fire, as has been remarked, in the wide grate ; no candle, not even a match, to give a glimmer of light in all the house ; a lamp shone in from the street, and that was all.

A rat appeared, looked cautiously around, and then moved unconcernedly across the floor, to finish up the crumbs Brigit had let fall. She was too well accustomed to such visitants to be troubled at the sight. But she was curiously excited, afraid too, she knew not of what, so that she was very glad to hear her father coming back, and stopping at the door. It must be he. There were no other steps passing. The street was quite silent and deserted. That showed how late it was, and lonesome for Brigeen, with no one only her mother and she just lying there without a word.

Brigit crept to the window and managed to open it again and look out. Her father was there, yes, and some one else too. Wearing a light overcoat this person was and smoking a cigarette. He was a student from the Hospital. Among the patients there and others connected with the place, he was known as the Bright Boy; in private, of course. But if you only knew how young, and wholesome and fresh this student looked, with his air of cheery kindness, not to speak of his being a good-looking, well-set-up kind of chap (and these things count for more with poor sick bodies than is generally supposed), well, then you would see how he got that nickname and how much better it suited him than being called just the Young Doctor, as these hospital students generally are.

"Why don't you hurry up and get that door open, man alive?" he was asking now, and he wid his hands in his pockets, as little Bride could see from above, doing a little quick-step on the pavement, while her father was noisily fumbling with the door-handle.

"It's from the inside it does open, sir. Herself does mostly lave it on the jar; the door, I mane, sir. It's what it should have slapped-to of itself. Brigeen! is that you I see above there? Come down here, acushla, and open the door for the doctor, not to be having him standing here this cold night."

"Sure, I'm not able to, father! I can't reach up to the lock. . . ."

"Then throw down the key to me."

Heavy with sleep and flurried and frightened, Brigit began searching about the room, fumbling

THE FIRST DOORSTEP

through the darkness, but always avoiding the bed whereon her mother lay.

"I can't . . . oh, I can't get it anywhere ; where at all must it be ? . . . Mother !" she ventured, "where have you the key hid ? Tell me quick the way I can fling it down to Father and he and the doctor waiting outside ?"

But there was no reply, save a groan. Brigit, terrified now in earnest, ran out of the room and down the wide staircase, feeling her way step by step through the deep gloom, till she reached the hall-door. She wanted to get as close as she could to the voices outside, for that would leave her less lonesome than being in the room above with her mother that wouldn't as much as answer her. Anything was better than that, even to be crying inside, while her father kept calling to her through the door to "turn the handle ; why don't ye ! Stand up on something, can't ye !"

But even if Brigit had understood his meaning, which is doubtful, what was there for her to stand on in that empty hall ? She did nothing but cry miserably.

"What's to be done now ?" said the Bright Boy ; "and all these lower windows are barred and shuttered. . . ."

He had shaken them in turns ; then, assisted by Doran, tried to force the lock. But in vain. The stout old bolt stood firm ; so did the door itself. The doorstep across which they were to have gone bringing help, remained impassable.

"It's a poor case entirely, so it is !" quoth Mr. Doran, beginning again to beat futilely upon the door ; while the young Doctor, stung with the splendour

of a sudden thought, flung off his overcoat and began swarming up a water-pipe.

"Take care, take care, sir, for the love of God! Sure it's what it's all rotten, the whole place is that ould! Come back, sir, for fraid it would let you down into the area below there, and where'll be the sinse in having you kilt, along wid all else!"

"The divel a fear," said the Bright Boy; "and anyway you can only die the once!"

With that, he had gained the sill of an upper window, innocent of bars; had got in to the house, and run downstairs and opened that obdurate door, in a trice.

Then he did his best, that young fellow, and put up a good fight for Mrs. Doran, with all the skill he had acquired at the profession he loved, and all the self-reliance and resourcefulness that had been rubbed into him, during the rough-and-tumble of life at a big public school. It's not always out of books that boys learn the things that stand to them best in after days.

But it was all no use. What could he do, when Anguish and Death had had so much time to make good their footing in that dreary place, before he had been summoned to bring the woman help? She only revived for an odd moment or so, coming back to the world she was quitting, sufficiently to whisper: "Sure it's too much trouble you're giving yourself, sir! Tired out you should be, here so long out of your bed! And I not able even to have a sup of sperits or a thing of the sort to offer you. . . I thought to have a trifle gathered . . the way the place here wouldn't be too poor-looking. . . Your good coat will be destroyed. . . Childher does be that mad for sweets.

. . Tim Carty . . . I feel a bit better in meself now, sir. . ."

But if she did, it was only a flash.

"Take this cup of tea," said the Bright Boy; "it's piping hot . . . it'll do you good. . ."

He was rather pleased with himself for this success. He had sent the inefficient Mr. Doran to a neighbour to borrow a "grain" and had actually achieved a brew by dint of an ingenuity the outcome of much experience in campings-out. Water had been coaxed to boil by burning waste papers found in another room, and fragments of the loose board beneath which Mrs. Doran's hoard had been hidden. But his efforts bore no fruit.

"I couldn't let it down, sir; I'm thankful to you," she said; and soon after she sank and died.

"Ah, she's gone, poor soul!" said the student; "we can do no more for her now," and he drew the coverlet very gently up over her breast.

"Stop that row, will you!" he added, impatiently to Mr. Doran, whose ostentatious weeping began to get on the Bright Boy's nerves; "crying and whinging won't do any good now. Here, look after the baby, will you? A ripping little kiddie he is too; and no mother, poor little beggar! Have you no friends, no woman that would come in here and . . . and do things . . ."

"We have, sir; but they're all a piece off . . ."

"Where? I can let them know."

"Och, sure not at all, sir! I wouldn't wish to be too troublesome, after all your honour's afther doing here. . . ."

The student stamped an impatient foot.

"Confound you, man, where is it you want the message taken? *You* can't leave this. . . ."

"It's Princess Street, sir; number three, your honour, where the Widdah Molally does mostly be stoppin'. Herself that had the greatest wish ever you knew for Mrs. Molally, comrade girls her daughter and poor Marg used to be long ago in the County Clare. . . ."

And here Mr. Doran, realising that already he was speaking of his wife in the past tense, began to sniff miserably again; and thereupon the Bright Boy disappeared, treading softly, out of respect to what he was leaving behind him, till he was clear of the house in which Mrs. Doran was lying very peacefully, being done with poverty and work and pain for ever. But once free of it, he began to whistle to himself, as he made his way to the address which he had wormed out of the squirming widower. It was some distance, and no tram or other conveyance was available at that hour, and he was pretty well done up; but he persevered till he found the place, a house seething with inmates, and extracted therefrom the mother of "poor Marg's comrade-girl from Clare".

Mrs. Molally was roused with some difficulty; a big, soft bubbling kind of old body, never to be seen abroad apart from her peddler's basket and an ancient Paisley shawl. This last she at once assumed, wide awake enough, once she had grasped the mission upon which the Bright Boy had come.

"An' is it that poor Marg Doran is gone, God mark her to grace, I pray!" she said groaningly. "She that was the decent, hard-working little girl always and ever. But sure we all have to die, and

doesn't want to, the weight of us, only when our time comes, we must leave all. Poor Marg was loath to part from little Brigeen, I'll go baill, let alone the babby a young son, you tell me she left after her, sir ? Ah dear, dear, poor Marg . . . to be sure and I'll go over there, why not, and do what's wanting . . . there's no one I'd sooner see waked and everything done right for, nor Marg . . . she and me poor dauther that was made upon one another . . . and proud I am to hear Marg went off so nice and aisy in the latter end . . ."

Here the young doctor cut her short by taking an abrupt leave.

"There's nothing in the world these people enjoy like a death, I do believe !" he said to himself, as he made his way back to the hospital to get a couple of hours' sleep if he could ; "like a lot of ghouls . . ."

And perhaps there is some foundation for what he said. Certainly such events among the poor are often, like the misfortunes of our best friends, not wholly displeasing. A funeral brings some excitement, the spending of unwonted money ; there is drink, a bad joy, but what are you going to do about that, till you supply a better one ? And there is company.

It all sounds pretty ghastly, but consider the ordinary conditions of life for the Molallys and Dorans. The old basket-woman had anticipations that were not altogether dismal as she set off on her errand of kindness. And these did not prevent her from shedding tears of very real, heartfelt sorrow, as she performed the last offices of friendship for poor Marg. Very meagre were the appliances at her disposal, and the result a poor one. As she surveyed the gaunt dreary

death-chamber, "It's no ways nacheral," she said to herself; "God be wid the ould times in the County Clare, where in a case of the kind, the neighbours wouldn't see you at a 'short for any white sheets you could want; and the young girls would be bringing in the nice feathery ferns and green branches to make an appearance there . . . but it's all the will o' God . . ."

What she could do, she did. The baby was tenderly cared for. Little Brigit, pale, excited, frightened and understanding not at all what had happened, was wrapped about with her comforting presence, and as soon as circumstances permitted, Mrs. Molally took the children away with her, till the wake should be over, and Marg Doran should have passed for the last time across the door-step of the old house wherein Dinny had been born.

CHAPTER II

THE SECOND DOORSTEP

NOT long after Dinny Doran had entered life as has been related, the old mansion in which this event had taken place sank still further in the social scale. For it began to be let out in tenements; the owner, or whoever was acting for him, despairing of any better fate for it.

About the same time, the house in Princess Street, which had for years occupied a similar lowly position, was condemned as "onsanitary." Mrs. Molally and her fellow-tenants were therefore obliged to seek new quarters. These were found in the decaying old mansion that had witnessed Dinny's birth. It was scarcely ideal for home-making to be sure but one can't always choose.

"Sure you have to be somewhere, and won't it do for a turn till a body can look about them?" said Mrs. Molally; "and well for us to get our heads in anywhere in a hurry. . . ."

There is a class, and these fresh inhabitants of the old house belonged to it, which sometimes perforce, sometimes from choice, spends much time in this "looking-about." Mr. Doran was a past master of such surveying, he being on his own showing always "just out of a job, and on the look-out for another."

Consequently a contemplative attitude was habitual with him.

But not so Mrs. Molally. Easy-going as she was, and devoid of any soaring ambitions, she was capable of continued effort. She had also a strong inclination for permanent conditions, such as Mr. Doran would scorn.

It was in this spirit that she had kept possession of the two children who had been cast, so to speak, into her arms by the death of their mother. Their father had shown himself "noways anshis" to get them back to his own keeping, when the funeral was over. It was the easiest thing to let them remain on with Mrs. Molally. Now that she had to move, the natural thing was, to bring them back to what had been their home, and that they should remain under her care in the cellar there. Having begun mothering the young Dorans, she found it hard to contemplate life without them. She had grown used to having them about her very quickly, being indeed in the habit of taking things in general "very kind" so that she never worried. This charitable outlook included the indifference with which Mr. Doran acquiesced in her assumption of his responsibilities. He always moved along the line of least resistance, or, as Mrs. Molally expressed it, he always "done what came the readiest to him, God help him, he had no thought that-a-way!"

Now a cellar is by no means the most desirable part of any house in which to set about rearing two young children. But this was what Mrs. Molally had in view. The cellar of the old mansion was very dark; it was also damp in the extreme, but it was cheap, as things went, and it was roomy. This last was a prime

consideration for the old basket-woman, who needed space for her goods, or rather for the piece of furniture that afforded accommodation for them ; an ancient bedstead, to wit, a huge four-poster, a magnificent relic of fine old workmanship. Mrs. Molally had no aesthetic cravings to be gratified by its stately proportions, but she clung fondly to it, for the practical consideration that beneath it she was able at night to store the left-overs from her day's peddling, whether fruit, buns or sweetstuffs. And when put to its legitimate use, she now found room in it, not only for her own portly form, but for " them two poor orphant children of Marg Doran's."

A cellar such as this, and a bed shared with an old woman . . . well, but Brigit and the baby were not of an age to be consulted ; neither were they hypercritical. It must be admitted that Mrs. Molally was a stranger to some of the more respectable, the severer virtues. Her theories of order and cleanliness left something to be desired. But she did her best. Things might have been much worse for the children. She swept and scrubbed betimes ; not very efficiently, perhaps, but what matter ! The light being so very dim, you couldn't rightly know if the corners were clean or not ; and the same pervading twilit gloom toned down the horrible blotches of damp upon the walls, that appeared there again and again on the smallest provocation, so that it really was no good striving to whitewash the place.

" Sure you have to set up wid it," said Mrs. Molally, placidly ; " after a night's rain, it's like an ould wild-dooock I do be, striving to empty the water out of the place"

None of these things troubled the children. Granny as they soon learnt to call the old woman who was befriending them, was placid and soft-voiced. They got cuddling from her, even if she was a bit remiss in the matter of soap and water ; and small blame to her, too, for that same, seeing what difficulties attend efforts after the most elementary ablution, in such domiciles. The children, like most children, indeed, had no particular longings after personal cleanliness. But they accepted any amount of petting. Little Dinny soon learned to laugh back into that kind old-full-moon face, beaming at him from its encircling cap-frills. This response of his would draw forth an enraptured : " Look at him now ! Cockin' th' ould eye at me . . . ! "

And Brigit, who had been used to a welcoming if very ragged lap and a comforting skirt to cling to whenever you felt afeard, found excellent substitutes for these things in Granny, and did not miss her mother so very much after all. As Mrs. Molally said, " a child disremimbers very quick, and so best ! Won't they have plenty to keep them down after, God help them ! "

With Mrs. Molally then in the cellar did the young Dorans spend the first few months of Baby Dinny's life, in monotonous security. They would be locked there, while Granny was out on her rounds. But this was no hardship. Dinny was too small to " know the differ " ; and Bride had always been used to this kind of restraint. And it was much less lonely now, than before, in the big room upstairs. She had Dinny to mind, and she learned to little-mother him with the usual girl-child's aptitude. Blessed womanhood ! Maybe its

cares do begin too soon in the class to which Bride belonged, and again, maybe there are compensations for the straining young backs and the tired feet, in the interchange of trusting love for protecting love that such conditions results from. Brigit felt the importance of her position in having charge of the baby. She enjoyed it. He was like the dolly she had often wished for and never possessed. What she had now was far better than the cold marble lady of the chimney-piece, let alone one out of a shop-window. Dinny was soft and living, and he soon began to be playable with. And when Mrs. Molally would be back of an evening, they would have supper together, not very sumptuous, but sometimes there would be a dainty from the stock-in-trade under the bed ; a handful of gooseberries, maybe, or a stale bun.

Yes, life might have been much harder for the young Dorans than as they had it with Mrs. Molally in the cellar. As a matter of fact it soon was. This which, in comparison with what was to come, might be described as a halcyon period in their existence came to an abrupt close.

It was in this way. A neighbour of more zeal than discretion twitted Mr. Doran with being " no man, to take an' lave his two infant childher a burghen on a poor widdah-woman like that ! "

This interference led to two results, of very differing character ; wrath on the part of the maligned father, leading to recriminations and blackened eyes, and then a sudden determination to assert his independence by marrying again, so as to provide a second mother for " them orphans, and not be beholden to anybody."

Keen were the comments called forth in the tenement-house by this event.

"Cock him up, faith! To say nothing would sarve Doran only getting another woman, and poor Marg scarce cold in her grave. God rest her sowl! And better off she is, too, to be dead and looking up at a board, nor the way she was knocked about . . . no comfort in life she had wid Doran."

"Very hard-set she was in the latter end, to make out the cause," said Mrs. Molally, pensively, "and in especial since the sister in America stopped sending the few shillings toarst the support of the ould father, as long as he was livin' wid Marg. Sure there's where Marg was in error, ever to let on a word about he dying. If she had held her whisht about that, the money might be coming in still, and the children be getting it . . . But poor Marg, sure, was very innocent, and had no thought only do the best she could for everyone. Too kind she was, and in particular to Doran himself . . . God help them for women, she and the likes of her . . . poor affectionate creatures that they are!"

"The men isn't so," observed the interlocutor, known as Miss Julia, because she had more pretensions to gentility than the other denizens of the place. She had come thither when the enforced flitting from the insanitary house in Princess Street had taken place. Miss Julia was considered somewhat odd, because of a certain neatness of dress, and the extreme cleanliness she contrived to maintain in her attic. She did sewing for a shop, and "kep' herself to herself" a good deal more than was felt to be friendly. But she made free with Mrs. Molally. She had known her for some

years : she liked to hear about the young Dorans from her ; their mother used to scrub for the shop in which she was employed.

" The men isn't so, I tell ye," she repeated, half defiantly, as Mrs. Molally made no comment ; " no, only whatever girl they're next, there's the best one for them. And so by Doran. The sorra long he spent, lamentin' poor Marg. But they say he's goan to have his own share of it yet, with that one he has above there in her place. And divel's cure to him, too ! Its an old saying, ' first God made them and then He matched them.' He's no good, and she's worse itself ; has a temper that bates the world, and can curse down the stars out of the skies, when she gets ' riz.' And sickly along with all . . . "

" Has to have her ears stuffed wid cotton wool against the teethaches, I hear," said Mrs. Molally, conversationally.

" Ay, and *that* grand, nothing will sarve her since she got marrit, only *pink* wool . . . "

" A nate little cut of a person though, I'm told, as straight as a rush," said the pacific Mrs. Molally.

" Nate ? A poor-lookin' scollop of a thing, I'd say ; like what a cat would drag in of a wet night," said Miss Julia ; " but wouldn't anything be good enough for Doran ! "

" Och, what about her appearance ? " sighed Mrs. Molally ; " that's not what Doran should have been minding about, only looking into the sort of person he was bringing in over them two infant children, the Lord mark them to grace ! Amen I pray ; for it's a nice point, no matter what way you look at it. Sure

they should have a kind hand about them . . . and they so small ! ”

“ Much Doran annoys himself about that ! ” said Miss Julia ; “ sure couldn’t you know by poor Marg the sort he is. Not that she ever was one to be talking. A pure lad Mickey Doran is and always was ; never a haporth of good to man nor mortal. Had he ever one shilling in this living world to overtake another ? No, never ! ” said Miss Julia with all the emphasis her thrifty, self-denying soul prompted ; “ and signs on it, the new wife is talking of lodgers already. . . ”

“ Lodgers, do you tell me that ? ” said Mrs. Molally, wagging her head ponderously from side to side ; “ well, them’s the poor childher that’s to be pitied ! If only he’d let them stop on with me below here . . . , we’re rale snug, the three of us, and I done what I could for them . . . ,” here Mrs. Molally blew forth a gusty sigh ; “ but I believe it’s what no one’s able to come between a father and his little family, barring it might be the Lord Lift’nant or the Pope of Rome. . . ”

“ Well, there’s the way of it now, just as I tell it to you,” said Miss Julia ; and went off to her work.

Now whether anyone other than the potentates just named could have interfered or not, it is certain that no one did. Bride and Dinny came under the absolute sway of their step-mother. And gloomy as had been the forebodings of their two friends, as recounted, the reality was far worse.

A very small stretch of imagination is all that is necessary to form some notion of what life is likely to be in such a home. One room, one bare room, in which to exist ; to sleep and wake, to wash (a neg-

ligible quantity, this) and dress ; to cook and eat and rest yourself, after your work . . . when you have any. Never to get away from the others, never to have any privacy, wherein to recover possession of yourself, if as must often happen you have lost patience, or temper, or courage. Never to be alone. . . . These things had existed in that great room, during " poor Marg's " life there ; but she had been a patient soul, and a loving. It had seemed all right to Brigit then. But now there were added to the other discomforting conditions, most nerve-racking noise, and crowding and confusion ; from outsiders, too ; the lodgers whom the second Mrs. Doran proceeded to add to her establishment. Add again to all these, scanty food and clothing, dirt, bad ventilation and worse smells, and then you will understand why children such as the young Dorans spend so much of their waking life in the streets :

" . . . Foam of lovely childhood, wave on wave
That surges all about the grimy walls,
That frolics round the doorways' evil gloom. . . . "

There they cluster, neglected, thin, ragged and barefoot, yet cheery withal, bright-eyed and " playing the game," as far as they know how. Unfathomable is the goodness of the poor to one another, and especially of the children from the depths ! And then those that survive ; what do they grow into ? were the frowsy, idle, drunken, often vicious men and women that haunt our slums once little fair blossoms like these ? Who is to blame ? And what are you going to do about it, anyway ?

The streets ! You wonder as you glance along them . . . places you wouldn't care to walk through your-

self, you know, why on earth the children crowd them like that! Horrid, dirty dangerous places for them . . . it oughtn't to be allowed. Ay, dangerous to soul as well as body; too often they present sights and language and companionship by no means edifying. But these little ones, such as once were lifted into the tender arms of the Christ Himself and were blessed, what can they do? Through the decree of Fate, rather than any act of their own, they must be somewhere; and again, what are you going to do? I think no other young animal is quite so defenceless as a little child; it is so long dependent upon others, having forgotten, ages ago, the self-protecting instincts of primitive man; and it never possesses any money value.

But stay! Doesn't a child in the streets very soon begin to fight for its own hand? This struggling instinct is soon utilized, and the Brides and Dinny's, as we shall see, are constrained to bring grist to the domestic mill.

Immortal is genius! Dean Swift's "Modest Proposal" of almost two centuries ago is interesting reading still.*

In addition to the material shortcomings of their home, as already set forth, the Doran children found themselves when taken from beneath Granny's warm wing, in a moral atmosphere of harsh words, sometimes of blows.

* (Modest Proposal that the children of beggars, labourers and farmers should be fattened up and sold for food at a year old) "and thereby avoid . . . perpetual misfortune, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance . . . houses or clothes . . . and the inevitable prospect of entailing miseries upon their breed for ever."

"I have no intentions," the second Mrs. Doran announced, "of being annoyed wid another woman's babbies, more nor can be helped."

Bride, old enough to understand, was very ready to take herself and Dinny out of reach of that scolding tongue and heavy hand.

"Where are you going?" her step-mother demanded of her one morning soon after she had taken the reins of the *ménage*.

"Down to Granny in the cellar," Brigit made answer, in all innocence.

"You'll not have any truck wid that ould faggot of a wan, wid my consent," said Mrs. Doran; "and I'd advise you not to, without it! So now, mind what I say! But get on out of this with the child! I must have the place to myself some time of the day! Go off now with yourself, and if you forget to come back, what odds!"

This, about having the place to herself, was meant only for the two children. It was an impossible condition when you kep' lodgers. But the behest to keep out of her way was one which Brigit was very ready to obey.

"He's heavy for a small little girleen, the like of Brigeen," a neighbour ventured this comment to the step-mother, who replied that Brigit was "whips well able to carry him about; and if she's not itself, she may's well learn and not be idling here under a body's feet."

"She'll manage him after a bit," Granny declared; "sure the crathureen isn't the weight of a dried lambskin, God bless him!"

And indeed it was seldom the baby met with any mischance through fault of Brigeen.

"I gev him ne'er a fall at all since the last time," she assured Mrs. Molally, who made enquiries now and then, but cautiously, to avoid rousing the ire of the second Mrs. Doran.

Little Bride had inherited, as was due, her dead mother's "cabe," a short full mantle, once black, now a kind of olive green through stress of wear and weather. It was a cast-off of the cook's at Dr. Brabazon's, and had originally been a rich and dainty garment, fit for any lady in the land. But the lace and glittering bugles, still hanging from it, only served to call cruel attention now to its contrast with former splendour. Long stole-like appendages graced it in front, so long that they often threatened to trip up the little girl, for they reached far beyond her scanty skirt, drooping earthward with a half pathetic, half-comical effect of draggled wings. Such as it was, Bride would assume it with an air of matronly dignity and tucking its voluminous folds well around the unconscious baby would make her devious and unsteady exit into the street.

Two great stone pillars flanked the entrance to the old mansion.

"See and screwge yourself and Dinny in tight behind one of them," hurriedly, furtively did Granny counsel Bride, observing the young nurse's efforts to keep her charge from the wind one harsh morning; "many's the time meself had to laugh and I a young slip in the County Clare, watching the way even the small little lambs had the sense to croodle down on the sheltery side of their mothers when the weather would be severe. . . ."

Brigit followed this teaching. But the stone pillars

were nowhere in comparison with the warm and woolly protection of Mrs. Molally's memories.

Thus were Dinny's earliest impressions based, so to speak, upon a doorstep. A sadly irresponsive thing! Cold, hard, dark of hue; altogether uninteresting and bald of suggestion. But Brigit and in time Dinny, with the unconscious philosophy of the poor, learned to detach themselves from their uncomfortable surroundings and to free their thoughts for the enjoyment of whatever offered itself proper for this purpose.

There may be, as some suppose, a strain of inherited Eastern lore among them which enables these people to "enter the Silences" . . . at least to "send the thoughts elsewhere" away from the contemplation of their own miseries. Indeed, without some such power, how could they go on living?

And if Poverty confers this power, what marvel that the Saints of old extolled it as in itself an enviable possession?

The young Dorans practised such detachment with great success, and thereby derived no small enjoyment from watching what was happening within sight of their airy day-nursery. For such it might be called. And in point of ventilation it was an improvement upon Granny's cellar. Being wind-swept it was less damp than that apartment. After some experience of it, Dinny began to look less like a sickly potato-sprout.

It was very entertaining to the children. They were never dull. So many things to be seen; men passing along to their work, if they had any; if not, lounging from one street-corner to another, or waiting outside public-houses on the chance of being offered a drink;

women gossiping at their doorways; loitering about on messages; leaning from upper windows. Mrs. Doran spent much spare time at hers, gazing with an extraordinary liveliness up and down the street as if in momentary expectation of some sight that it would never do to miss. Stray dogs; wistful and lean, tail between legs, keeping a wary eye out for a chance morsel of bread and more often than not getting a stone. Street-hawkers; the po-lisman, before whom, stalking stately along in impenetrable majesty, it were well to "have behaviour;" of course that needn't keep you from putting your tongue out at him behind his back. And now and then, but at lengthening intervals the Bright Boy would stride briskly by. But he was getting on in his profession; when he did pass, he was forgetting to look up at the window through which he had passed the night that Dinny was born.

For hours at a time, Brigit would sit, observing these things, hugging her baby on that very small lap of hers in their nook upon the doorstep. Only now and then would she lay him out of her arms. That might happen when a barrel-organ took their street on its weekly rounds. Then would Bride divest herself of the "cabe," and rolling Dinny in it, till he looked like a modern young mummy, she would bestow him behind the pillar in such a way that he could not fall. And forth would she trip, gaily enough, to make one of a troop of other children whom the music would have attracted from adjoining houses and alleys. Just as merrily would those scanty frocks be flicked as if they were whole and silken; and the small brown bare feet fall as pat to the music as if encased in shining shoon.

THE SECOND DOORSTEP

It was here on the doorstep that Dinny made his first effort at independent movement. There had been a previous stage of wriggling ; then a lop-sided crawl ; then, to Brigit's pride, her baby reared himself upright, clinging desperately to his " houl" of her hand . . . By degrees the soft, weakly little body learned to balance itself alone ; then to walk a few unsteady paces ; and this accomplishment marked a new era in the lives of the children.

It was not reached without some mishaps ; falls and bruises of small limbs. But these the children regarded with indifference. Even Dinny himself made no audible demonstration of distress over his injuries. He had learned before then how much wiser it is to be silent over scratch or fall than to cry over the pain they cause you with the certainty of getting spanked then, in order to give you something to cry for. This Spartan treatment undoubtedly makes for the self-control that is so enviable. It might well be inculcated in higher circles than that which included the young Dorans. Children of more pretentious breeding have been known to play to the gallery on occasions. As thus : they will refrain from audible demonstrations of suffering over bruise or scratch, till a possible sympathiser appears ; then to howl vigorously, and being asked, " why now, when not before," to reply, logically enough, " what would be the sense in crying, when there wasn't anyone to hear you ! "

Dinny found his feet all the more speedily for being unencumbered with superfluous clothing. Then Bride began to wander farther a-field with him ; at first, just the length of their own street, but by degrees,

when Tim Carty happened along, they would compass wider flights. Tim and Brigit would each take a hand of Dinny's in theirs, and thus help him on. But such marches were pretty slow. Tim's patience would soon be exhausted. Some other, more grown-up interest would drag a red herring across the trail of his fancy, and he would treacherously and swiftly lope away, leaving Dinny with only Brigit to depend "out of." Then Dinny, discouraged by the withdrawal of the aegis of Tim's protecting presence, would get very tired; and the little mother would hoist him in her small arms, and stagger back with him to their doorstep. She felt safer near home.

There were also the shop windows. From long habit, the Tims and Brides and Dinnys of our towns obtain much enjoyment of a vicarious and absolutely cost-free kind, simply by looking at the pleasant and pretty things therein displayed, which they can never dream of possessing. And judging by the faces one sees in the streets, gloating over the treasures displayed at Christmas time in the shop windows, faces thin and white, but never scowling or discontented, the pleasure derived thereby is of a satisfying nature; and one can comfortably reflect that the good things of life are not so unevenly divided, after all.

A favourite resort of our children was a narrow and very ill-kept street, to which they were attracted by bright posters shown there by day, and still brighter lights by night. These drew attention to a theatre. Bride and Dinny would hang about the place, not in the least understanding what it was, but interested in catching glimpses now and then of the people who

went in and out ; people quite different from any they saw from their own doorstep.

" Rale grand those ladies should be ! " thus did Brigit make comment to Dinny, " wid their feathery hats upon them, and the big high heels to their shoes ! And the gentlemen grand, too ; terrible rich the whole of them ! "

Dinny said nothing, being slow of speech as well as of most other things. And just then the barrel-organ already alluded to came down this particular street ; stopped close to the children, and began grinding out a merry tune. With the usual magic speed, a small crowd of children collected, and began capering about in time to the music.

Chief among the little dancers was Brigit. She freed herself from Dinny's clasping fingers with a suddenness that sent him backwards upon the theatre doorstep, and then to it she went, with a will ; skipping from side to side ; now advancing now retiring, with steps unknown to the profession but which were always true to the rhythm of the music, and which had a certain wild grace of their own.

Surely there is some subtle power about dancing ! Brigit became like one transformed as she pursued her gambollings. Her dark elf-locks floated loose about her face ; she was flushed with the exercise ; her eyes flashed triumph, for hadn't she all the others " bet," and still she was dancing away, enraptured with the joy of those music-inspired movements.

Suddenly just as she had executed a bound of extra agility, she heard a loud " Bravo ! " and hands being clapped, just behind where Dinny was sitting on the doorstep.

Brigit stopped short, and hung her head. There stood a stout, pleasant-faced gentleman who was coming out of the theatre and looking smilingly at Brigit.

"Well done, little girl! Why, where did you learn those steps, eh?"

Brigit said nothing. She was too much surprised for speech.

"You dance very well," said the gentleman, and he put his hand into his pocket and held out a shilling, "here, take this; what will you do with it, I wonder, and this is your little brother, isn't it?" as Brigit sidled over to Dinny for 'fraid he might take to go cry at anyone speaking to her let alone a grand gentleman . . . "and why is he so white and thin, what?"

But Brigit was too much overcome by the suddenness of all this to be capable of any intelligible reply. At least it is open to doubt whether the gentleman fathomed the meaning of "the sarra haporth there was 'on' Dinny at all at all; its only the gait of goan he has."

However, even if he didn't understand her, the gentleman, who was very fine, in a white waistcoat and a ring upon his hand, smiled down at the ragged children, and handed the shilling over to Brigit, telling her to run off and buy sweets with it.

That shilling! What it led to! But . . . Sweets indeed! Brigit made a small curtsy, and thanked the gentleman, very prettily, he thought, though she was so shy. But sweets! and they wid a real hard hunger upon them!

They waited only till the gentleman had turned a broad back upon the street and had disappeared.

Then, hand-in-hand as usual, they sped off as quickly as Dinny's limitations would permit, towards a certain eating-house very familiar to them. Often and often had they and Tim Carty flattened noses against its windows; often had their small grimy fingers sullied the shining glass thereof, the while they pointed out to one another the various delicacies their individual tastes coveted. Now, joy! They need covet no longer. They could buy what they chose. Tim's share could be kep' for him, ready, till next they saw him.

"Wait you there!" said Bride to Dinny, in stern agitated whisper, arresting his steps at the shop-door, while she herself, brave of mien though quaking inwardly, went inside. Her heart beat with all the pleasurable excitement of a great adventure. To be goan into that grand place, as bould as brass, and you wid a whole shilling in the heel of yer fist! She wondered if it wasn't just dreaming she was.

And when she got into the shop, it was even more splendid than she had imagined. Bright and glittery and all polished up to the nines! Velvet chairs, no less, and little white cloths stuck into the tumblers and flowers; and the grand smell of mait, and all the cakes and things

It was too much for young Brigit. Having seen these things, like the Queen of Sheba there was no more spirit left in her. She faltered, then, with crimson cheeks she retreated, stumbling in her fright and haste, afraid, till she got outside of maybe being follied and blemt for having gone in there at all. But no one passed any remarks that she heard. She seized Dinny's hand and whirled him swiftly away from the delect-

able prospect he had been enjoying ; to his utter amazement.

" What at all h-a-ils ye, Brigeen ? " he asked as soon as she slackened their pace ; " why did you get nothing 'ithin there ? "

" Bekase I didn't ! So there now and let you have no more chat out of ye, about things you don't understand ! " said Brigit.

After having been discomfited, you naturally want to take it out of someone else.

" I thought to see some grand cakes in the windy " ventured Dinny.

" No size at all, them worn't," said Brigit.

Dinny was silenced by this, having a lively faith in Brigeen and all her works. Hungry though he was therefore, he trotted along by her side, disappointed but full of hope. He was sure Brigit would do something splendid wid that shilling.

So she would, an' only she could. But she was suffering from a horrible, black flatness of spirit ; a sense of failure. And it would never do to let Dinny suspect her of such a feeling. It was one of his comforts that he thought Brigeen could do anything, a'most, and not be afeard. Brigit didn't argue this out to herself. It was, however at the bottom of her action now.

She couldn't have told herself why she had turned tail and fled from that shop. Maybe if Dinny had crept in along with her, if she had had the touch of his hand in hers, she would have been more resolute. There is creative power in Thought.

By degrees her spirit rose ; it was really a proud spirit, that had had plenty of self-reliance ground into

it, by harsh treatment ; by the long lonely hours when she had been Dinny's only protector. It upheld her now. She was ready to follow the breath of adventure that seemed abroad that day. She wanted to do something daring, something that would reinstate her in her own as well as Dinny's good opinion, to the renewed comfort of both. She was strung up to any pitch.

A chance of derring-do soon presented itself.

A tramcar had halted close to the pavement along which the children were walking. Brigit stopped short ; then jerked Dinny towards it. The next moment, both children were standing on the step, trembling with excitement.

Even the sturdy-minded Brigit was feeling doubtful of her next move, when the conductor turned and saw them.

" What are yous doing here ? " he asked ; " be off wid yerselves ! " He had enough to do, without having to argufy with two young whipstherers like that.

Again Brigit's heart sank down, down. Why had she attempted such a flight ? And she had actually made a step back, when her eyes caught Dinny's fixed on her, as if the world held nothing else for him but just Brigeen ; eyes that, like her own, were of that strange blue that is more than blue and sometimes said to be peculiarly Irish. Brigit knew nothing about this, but the interchange of looks with Dinny, trusting, helpless Dinny, stiffened her back. She could not say anything, but she unclosed her hand, to show the shilling.

Her talisman failed. Humiliating is the incredulity with which too often Poverty's rare bits of good luck are received !

"And where did you come by that?" demanded the conductor; "noways rightly, I'm too sure of that! Here, get down out of me way!"

"A gentleman that gev it to me . . ." began Brigit, desperately striving to pull herself together; "and . . ."

"What lies is that to be tellin' me, up to me face! Afther being gev a whole shillin', are ye? What next? Come, clear out of this!"

With swelling heart, Brigit was again about to beat a shamefaced retreat, when something surprising happened. It was hardly credible, so used was she to fighting for her own hand, but here was some one speaking up for her, and taking her part. . . .

"It's all right, Conductor!" said some one from behind.

Brigit turned, scarcely believing the words applied to them, and beheld the loveliest of a young lady, and she with one shiny shoe already on the step. And it *was* them she meant!

"It's really quite all right," she went on; "I happened to see the child being given the shilling; it was just as she said . . ."

The man hesitated a little. He just touched his cap with a look of recognition. He knew the young lady well by sight, Miss Ruth Brabazon she was, the only child of the big Doctor in the Square. Still . . .

"If they can pay you, you're not going to refuse to take them, are you?" she said a bit hotly.

"No, Miss, of course if you seen it, its all right, and we . . . but you see, Miss, them small class of children and they without anyone to have an eye on them . . .

and if anything was to happen, who'd get blemt only me ! ”

Brigit listened, looking from one to the other speaker, and wishing she could slip away with Dinny.

But the young lady made up her mind about what was to be done.

“ I'll look after them, then ! I'll be responsible. Why shouldn't they go, if they have a mind to ? I'll take them outside where they'll not interfere with anyone. Come, trot up the steps, little girl ! ”

And the astonished Brigit found herself being piloted aloft, while Miss Brabazon seizing the helpless Dinny in her strong young arms, lifted him after her, and deposited him on the top of the tram, in no time.

“ Here, come along to the front, where we can look about us ! ” said the young lady, gaily.

So they did that.

But as they were choosing where they would sit, Brigit caught sight of a figure passing in the street below ; the Bright Boy. He was losing this title now, having advanced to a more dignified status in life. He was more generally known as Jack at this period. It wasn't his name, but he was that kind of person.

Jack then, or Dr. O'Brien, whichever you choose to call him, chanced to glance up at the car, just as it was moving off. His face changed. He stopped, then made a dash for it and jumped up on the tram. Straight for the top he made, and walked forward, and then when he was close to the young lady and the children, he took off his hat and exclaimed, “ Miss Brabazon ! Who would have dreamt of seeing *you* here ! ”

" And why not ? " she said, while Brigit was thinking to herself, " Sure, what at all ! Weren't you looking straight up at us and you passing along ! " .

But she said nothing. She had resumed her guardianship of Dinny, and the two barefoot children subsided into the place chosen for them by Ruth, and took up as little room as possible. At first Brigit was beset by fears, when she found that they were being borne swiftly farther and farther away from any of the known landmarks. Where were they going ? She had even in the back of her mind a half-formed resolution to climb down off the tram, when neither of " Them " would be looking . . . and they weren't, either, most of the time, only at one another . . . but that would be only foolishness. How would she get Dinny down ? And the conductor . . . would he let her go ? He was very grand-spoken and impident-
lek in himself. And how would she pay him ; would he give her back any of that shilling ? And . . . and

And then Brigeen's eyes fell on Dinny. His small pale face was flushed and his eyes dancing with pleasure. Brigit yielded, too, a prey to the joy of the moment.

Well, and no wonder ! It was splendid, up there. Many and many times a-day had the children watched the trams dashing magnificently past, but never till now had they set foot upon one. Unknown and unlooked-for it all was strange. Street after street did they glide through. From their giddy height they could look down on all things ; the grand shops, with ladies to match going in and out of them, and no doubt buying their hearts' desire ; carts and carriages ;

other trams meeting theirs, at such close quarters that it seemed they must clash, so that Dinny and Brigit held their respective breaths, and sat tight, till the danger would be past, and then they would expand again and laugh . . . Then a wide bridge to cross ; white, long-winged birds calling, and fluttering there above the water ; along by it they were borne ; and then the conductor began collecting the fares.

At once Brigit became careful and troubled again. That shilling ! Would he take to go fight her again ?

While she was distractedly fingering the coin in her hot grimy little hand, " Four please ! " said Jack, indicating the children as belonging to his party. So there was her big hill of difficulty crossed, without her having come to it at all.

" How far are yous going ? " asked the Conductor of Brigit. She could only look helplessly at the young lady. How far ! She hadn't the remotest idea.

" I'll see after them," Ruth said ; and the man in authority retired.

It was then elicited with difficulty that Dinny had the terriblest wish that ever you knew . . . Brigit's own desires being kept in the background . . . to see the lions in the Park . . . and so, and so. . . .

" I call that pluck, sheer pluck ! " said Ruth in an admiring aside to Jack ; " fancy, going off on their own. . . . It's the Zoo, no less, they want, and I doubt if they had ever stepped on a tram before ! "

" Well, they've made no mistake ; can't well miss it now . . . we'll show them which way to take . . . "

" Show them ? Sure can't I take them there ? They couldn't go in alone. . . . "

" Why not ? Street kiddies like that aren't the

helpless innocents you imagine ! " said Jack, anxiously watchful of Ruth's changing looks.

" Anyway, I'm going with them ! " she announced.

" But . . but what about the People's Gardens ! You've just said you'd like to go there to see the tulips

" Did I ? Can't I change my mind ? " said Ruth.

Jack's face fell at this. It didn't restore his equanimity when she added sweetly, " But don't let that prevent you from enjoying yourself there ! "

" Certainly not ! " said Jack, stoutly. But oh, what did he care for tulips. And he had been pluming himself so, on this chance meeting with Ruth. And he with an hour or so to spare and the glorious day that it was. . . He ground his teeth, at least if he had been the hero of a " best-seller " he would have, and have sworn softly under his breath too, at this dashing of his hopes to earth, and for what ? To make holiday for a brace of grimy street-arabs.

But being only Jack, he did neither of these things, and when Ruth said, " How can I desert the kiddies before they're half through their adventure ? " he only said, " If that's how you look at the thing . . . "

But he was wondering ruefully where he was to come in.

" Just fancy the poor little pair ! The spunk of them ; spending their money like that ! "

" Ready to blow it all in, like real sports, aren't they ? " said Jack, feigning an interest he could not really be expected to feel in the doings of the young Dorans ; " well " more cheerfully, " there's some wonderful new beastie in the Gardens . . . I could

come along and give a hand with the children, if I may ? " he ended lamely.

" The Park's not mine," said Ruth ; " but it's a pity for both of us to miss the tulips, isn't it ? "

" Oh, tulips be . . ." Jack began ; then added, " I don't really so much mind. And a bit of self-sacrifice is good for the soul . . . so they say . . . Anyway, I always rather loathed tulips . . . "

Ruth turned her head, and Brigit who was watching all this from the other side of the tram-top, saw her young lady's cheeks redden, and that she was trying not to laugh. But before there was time for more, the tram stopped, and Jack made a remark of singular originality.

" Here we are ! "

" Yes ; it doesn't take so extra long, does it, to get here ? " said Ruth.

" Depends," said Jack ; " the length of a journey just . . . it just seems . . . I thought it . . . sometimes you wish a thing to go on for ever . . . "

" What ! A tuppenny tram ! " said Ruth, laughing outright now.

But it had been an intoxication to Jack.

" Come along ! " she said to Brigit ; and to Jack, " You'd better take the small boy down the steps. . . "

" Sure, he's well able himself, Sir," Brigit ventured.

" I daresay ; but suppose he fell . . . " said Ruth.

" . . . and got broken, and I had to pick up the bits and clean up the mess off the tram-line," said Jack.

The children received this brilliant sally with a timid laugh. It was then as the four walked forward,

through the gates, that Jack found out that their name was Doran and that they lived in the big ould house in Church Street.

"Doran . . . I know now," said Jack ; " and you have no mother, I think . . . ?"

"No, sir . . . not to say rightly, a mother, sir . . ."

"Father married again, eh? Just the sort that would."

"What! You knew them?" said Ruth.

"I once had a slight professional acquaintance with the family," replied Jack.

He had by now but faint memories of that night, and his climbing feat; all that remained was the tragical ending of it, and that was a thing too common to be very vivid in his mind. And just now he had other things more insistent to occupy his attention. Ruth was pacing along beside him, in her pale grey spring dress, with violets at her throat and in her hat; and the air was fresh and buoyant and the sun shone, in the most beautiful and blessed world you can imagine.

The children followed, hand in hand. It was like a dream! The stout gentleman and his shilling; the frustrated attempt upon the cakes; then the hardly-won ascent of the tram; the journey thereon, with the kind, merry young people; and then the Park itself.

They had never seen anything like it before. True, there are green places, and flowers and trees, in Dublin, but none were near where they lived. Sometimes they strayed as far as the Square where the big Doctor and his daughter lived. There were lovely gardens

belonging to that Square, but they were carefully defended by a low wall and railings from any outsider. Brigit with prodigious effort would hoist Dinny up on the wall, and they would look with great interest upon the doings of the favoured ones inside the sacred enclosure ; grand ladies sitting there reading, or exercising their fat little dogs ; invalids taking the air in sheltered nooks ; but the children were the most engrossing ; their games, their talk and laughter, their quarrellings and the generosity with which they would throw the food they didn't want to the birds that nested happily among the trees in that sweet place . . all these things would Bride and Dinny look at, absorbed and content, in spite of the fact that they were always on the wrong, the outside

And now, here they were, walking unchecked through a place far bigger, far more beautiful than any Square gardens ; and not one axing to meddle them !

How wide it was in the Park ! how green and breezy and sweet ! And not a house in sight ! Why, Dinny was beginning even to feel lonesome, when Miss Ruth turned with a gay little smile, and said, " Look at the deer ! " and the young doctor lifted Dinny in his arms to point them out. Far away they were, feeding under trees, what looked like little cows, you'd think, only with big horns that you'd wonder how they could bear the weight of them. And suddenly there was a shout, and away with the whole of them, like the wind, bounding on such little thin legs . . . !

But even that was nothing, compared with the Zoo itself.

" Beyant tellin'," Brigit described it afterwards to

Tim Carty ; " elephants and camels and li'ns ; oh troth, of all the strange appearances of beasts and they had them there, and they in big cages, the way they couldn't get at you and maybe have you ett . . "

The children had got over their shyness and were really enjoying themselves, when Ruth observed that Dinny was taking very eager bites at one of the buns which Jack had provided, with an eye to the children as well as the animals. Dinny's action was unmistakable.

" I do believe that child is hungry ! " said Ruth to Jack.

" A bit peckish, I daresay," replied Jack, with the indifference of long wont among the poor.

" He must be *starving* ! To eat that awful bun . . "

" Well, they're used to it. . . I'll get them some more "

" But aren't those buns pretty bad feeding ? Won't that spoil their dinners. . . ? "

It may here be stated that Ruth was not only young, but from a variety of causes that need not be set down, she knew absolutely nothing about the poor, beyond of course what was before her eyes during her flittings to and fro in the streets.

" Why, do you suppose that they are going back to a regular dinner, meat, vegetables, pudding and fruit, and . . . "

" Not being quite a fool, I suppose nothing of the kind," said Ruth, hotly ; " but I do suppose that even poor people must have some kind of mid-day meal "

" As a matter of fact, very often they don't," said Jack.

"Oh!" gasped Ruth.

"That's so," said Jack, "and what are you going to do about it?"

"Well . . . Do about it? I don't know Except . . . What's the matter with giving these little creatures a decent dinner for once? Just to round out their treat! Why not? All the more if, as you say, they don't get any as a rule."

"But what good would it do?" asked Jack, helplessly. He had vague notions about 'indiscriminate charity' gleaned from the conversations he sometimes overheard among the more thoughtful students he met . . . those who had leisure for anything beyond bestowing an alms when their feelings were uncomfortably worked upon by the misery they encountered. Jack's pockets had an awkward habit of being empty, and he was just now very conscious of having already spent more small change than he could well spare, during this expedition.

But besides this, he wanted to talk to Ruth about other matters than the problem of the poor.

"What good?" echoed Ruth; "why it would make them comfy and happy for once! And surely it can't do any harm to give them a good time . . . just one purple patch . . ."

Ruth ended with a laugh as if to say, "Have you any answer ready to that?"

Jack hesitated, as if he really hadn't. But then, thus challenged, he said, "Why, I don't set up as an authority on these things! But people that spend years and years studying up the question, say that . . . that . . . that giving away things . . . and

feeding people for nothing, does far more harm than good, and . . . "

At this point of his harangue, Jack caught a look from Ruth. A hesitating doubt was replacing the gay triumph with which she had ended up her little speech. All Jack saw however was, how sweet were those eyes, how they resembled the violets she wore. Anything, anything to stop this wretched discussion of what to him was a foregone conclusion! His precious opportunity to be wasted in nonsense . . .

"And anyway," he blurted out, awkwardly enough, "it's just foolishness . . . what's more you can't do these things . . ."

Ruth's lately-born scheme only needed this.

"Whether I can or whether I can't, I'm going to! So there!" she said, and lifted a chin dimpled with determination at Jack; "and without your sovereign help or approval, since I'm not to hope for either; and mind, you're not to interfere or say another word! Come along, children, quick!" she called to Brigit, who with difficulty detached herself and Dinny from the enthralling contemplation of the bears. They would far rather have been looking at them than at any dinner, so excited were they.

Silence fell on the little party as they moved away over the sun-warmed sward. For Jack the brightness had vanished behind a cloud. When they reached the entrance, "Don't let me put a stop to your plans," said Ruth sweetly to the crest-fallen Jack.

"You've done that already . . ."

"I? How? I didn't ask you to . . ."

"It's not that!" gloomily.

"Well, aren't you big enough to go off by yourself now?"

"By myself! And do you think . . . But what matter, when those two kids that you never saw before and likely never will lay eyes on again are to be humoured."

"They look as if they had a pretty thin time," said Ruth, "I only want to do them good. . ."

Indeed so she did.

"It's the hardest job ever anyone tackled, to do good to people. . ."

"I can only try."

"Why not start on some one you know? I'm sure I want a kind hand over me! But no one seems to want to do me good!"

At this Ruth laughed, and so did he. And by then they had reached a tram just about to start for the city.

Jack looked at his watch.

"I'm due at the hospital in five minutes! Sorry I can't lend a hand further. . ."

"I wouldn't let you! Going against your conscience. . ."

As the children warily climbed to the top of the car, she said with apparent irrelevance: "I'm going to the theatre on Friday. . ."

"My night off! Good!"

He hailed an outside and vanished, reflecting with a half-amused dismay that paying the fare would reduce him to the dinnerless status of the young Dorans. He was used to such tight places, however. The Jacks of our cities possess reservoirs to be tapped. Their difficulties, their modes of extrication therefrom are

all unsuspected by the Ruths, living in absolute ignorance of anything connected with money except spending it agreeably.

Of course she knew there was a thing called Poverty. She had once tried to read a book about the Fourth Dimension. The one was as real to her as the other at that period. Certainly she never imagined empty pockets in Jack's stylish well-kept apparel. For he was that sort of person too, acting on the principle that it's bad enough to be poor, but the mischief entirely to appear so.

Miss Brabazon and the children dismounted from their tram close to the spot from whence they had started upon that amazing adventure. The restaurant from which Brigit had made her ignominious retreat was the only one in sight. Thither Miss Ruth led them, and went in with a cheerful: "This way, children!" over her shoulder as she advanced.

But the shadow of her fiasco was over Brigit. She hung back, and of course so did Dinny, without attempting to cross the doorstep. Thus there was no connection apparent between the thin, neglected street-children, standing timidly hand-in-hand at the entrance and the beaming, blooming young lady who was moving up the shop with the agreeable air of confidence that indeed she was entitled to wear. It was, therefore, merely in the day's work for a grand-looking lady and she rustling in silk and with goold chains hanging from her, to step forward from her place and say to the children, "Now then, don't you know you mustn't be here! Be off at once!"

Brigit at once shrank back. The habit was strong upon her of not being wanted anywhere. Dinny

clung to her hand as usual, and they might have disappeared then and there, they not being at all clear of the young lady's intentions about them, when she turned round and beckoned to them.

"What's keeping you! This way!" she said with that gay smile of hers.

"But . . . but I beg your pardon, Madame," said the black silk lady, "but . . . I don't really understand . . . I'm afraid there's some mistake . . .

"Why, what's the trouble? All I want is to get these children fed. . . something quite plain, you know, but nourishing . . . They're pretty hungry, and so am I. . . Chicken and ham, say . . . yes . . . and some nice pudding . . ."

Ruth beamed with the anticipation for the children.

"But, madame . . you don't mean to dine them here! You see . . . we try to keep the place select . . . we have high-class customers . . . we must consider them . . ."

And at that very moment there sailed forth, slow and stately from some inner holy of holies, an old lady with two children who called her granny. They were somewhere about the respective sizes of Bride and Dinny, and they simply shone with dinner and general well-being. They were loudly demanding supplies of chocolates to bring home with them. The old lady stopped to pay and to let them choose what they liked, close to the young Dorans, and Brigit heard her say, "Keep beside me, my dears; don't go near those two children; dear knows what sort of place they come from: maybe reeking with fever as well as dirt!"

And she glanced, not so much unkindly as nervously

at the bare feet, the ragged clothes, the tousled heads of Bride and Dinny. The little-mother understood the look, and the difference between themselves and the rich children, dainty and well cared for. Her heart shrank. What business indeed had they there!

"You hear that, madame?" said the manageress. "I'm sure you'll understand . . . As far as a couple of cakes would go . . ."

"They're not begging here!" said Ruth, hotly; "of course I'm paying . . ." and she looked straight at the other as much as to say, "There's another chance for you!"

"I'm sorry, madame; but I have my duty to my employer to consider . . ."

So she had, too.

"And we call this a Christian country, and yet I can't get a couple of hungry children fed without a fuss . . ."

She walked out of the shop, angry and perplexed. She had to admit to herself that she might have been just a bit unreasonable. But the fact remained, she couldn't do what she intended. It was too bad, to have brought the hungry children within sight of food, and then to have let them be disappointed. She hesitated and thought. . . .

There was Jack, too! He had said she couldn't do it, that it was no use anyway . . . and that spurred her the more.

"Let them go off like that? Oh, I simply can't bear to let Jack get the better of me . . . no, its not that . . .! But I must . . .! I will do it! If only I could take them home with me . . .!"

It was just the thing! Why hadn't she thought

of it before ! Father was away for the day, with some bad case in the country. It was a splendid idea. Things apparently absurd are all right for the only child of a wealthy and adoring father.

Thus it came about that not long after, Bride and Dinny found themselves seated in the magnificent dining-room of that very house, the doorstep of which had afforded their mother her last morning's work.

You can imagine it ; the two ragged, shy street-Arabs, ushered into that stately dining-room with its rich curtains, its magnificent appointments . . . the Doctor was a bit of a connoisseur in old furniture and silver . . . the tempting food. But all the kindness of the young hostess couldn't make the experiment anything but a failure.

" It bet the world, out of a face," thus Brigit reported next day to Tim, " the splendid appearance there was upon the place ; the table covered with a white cloth and done out with flowers. And for the forks and spoons, you'd think the Quality should just be moidered wid so many of them ! And the great, imminse size of the house, and a great big fellah of a sarvint-man standing there, as if he was watching every bit you'd put into yer head . . . not that we got even to taste anything. For what do you think, only me brave Dinny commences to go cry ! ' What's on him, at all, at all ? ' says the young lady ; ' see could you console him ! ' she says. So down I gets off the chair I was sitting upon, foreninst Dinny and the width of the table between us, and goes round to him, and says he to me, and he wid his two fists stuck into his eyes, ' I want to go home ! ' he says, and tumbles

down on the floor, and runs his head in anundher me cabé ! ”

“ Childher does have no wit that-away,” said Tim, with the lordly superiority of greater experience, “ and what happened then ? ”

“ The young lady waitied, and even sent the sarvint away, for fraid Dinny might be making strange with him ; but all was of no avail. Dinny’d do nothing only roar milia murther to be let go. So the young lady said there was no use having people annoyed. And she gave us lashins and lavins of what was on the table, to bring wid us ; and we ett it sitting outside at the theatre ; the grandest of a feast ! and here’s your share, Tim Carty. And we gave a cake to Granny, and another to Herself, the way she’d not be fau’ting us. And instead of she being someways thankful, the ould rap, she was as cross as an armful of cats that she didn’t get more . . . ”

“ And where have you the shillin’ ? ” demanded Tim. He had disposed of the dainties Brigit had given him, with many enjoying smacks, and now was sucking with manly ease at a half-burnt cigarette that he had just picked up.

Brigit hesitated, and grew red ; then, shamefacedly, “ Didn’t she take it off of me ! ”

“ Musha ! and what call in life had you to let on a word about it ! Mightn’t you have known better ! ”

“ An’ so I did, too ; but it was Dinny whisht ! is that him coming down the stairs ? ” she and Tim were sitting together on one of the lower steps . . . “ no it’s not . . . sure you needn’t let on I told you . . . but nothing would do him and he half asleep last night, only asking to be let have a

look at the shillin'. And herself heard him. And the sarra good then in me saying it was what he was only romancing out of him he was, and that I had ne'er a shillin' black, blue or holy! She had a bad suspicion of it then, and I could get no good of her . . . Look at me arm, I bid ye, where she has it all bruised, welting me to tell her . . ."

"Ay, and there's more folly!" pronounced Tim, bitterly, as he examined with perfunctory interest the bruises that Brigit displayed so indifferently, even proudly; "why would you go fight her till you're more her match! Sure you should have more wit! If she had drink taken itself, I'd not blame ye so much!"

"So she is, drinking a power, those times," said Brigit, "and does never murther ye right till she has too much taken. Dinny gets cowed then, and that is how she got it all out of him, every blessed thing we did, and the way we got the shillin'. So with that, she says, 'Yous can just go off wid yourselves, the two of yous, from under me feet, and knock out sport and feeding for yourselves. And them that gives to the lek of yous,' says she, 'they'll never miss it; it will all be before them, and stand to them well, to be charitable, and help them to make their sows. Anything they give, they'll be hanging out of them things in Paradise . . . and heartscalded I do be here, striving to keep buckle and tongue together, and yer father off stravaguing the road, the Lord knows where . . . "She's worse than ever since he quit off, but sure you couldn't blame him, wid her timper . . . But would you b'lieve that, Tim, about Paradise? because if that's the way of it, I'd go near no one to

look for help, only Miss Ruth as they do call her, she's that nice and gay in herself ! ”

“ What appearance is there upon her ? ” asked Tim.

“ An' is it that you never seen her ! Glory ! Well, now, she's lovely ! Her hair shining that you'd imagine it ud give light of itself, and big doll's eyes, the very colour of port-wine. . . . ”

“ That's only foolish talk,” said Tim, “ but for getting into Paradise, you'll be hearing ‘ Blessed are ye poor,’ and that lady should be very rich by what a body hears . . . and then there's about camels getting into Heaven through the eye of a needle. . . . ”

“ An' they wid big humps upon them, too ! ” said Brigit, “ that you'd think should stick . . . them's what we seen in the Zoo . . . Ha ! Tim Carty ! *you* never seen them, nor the li'ns, nor ”

At this Tim disappeared, ostensibly to enjoy a stolen and perilous jaunt upon the back of a passing coal-cart ; but Brigit thought with a sense of elation, he couldn't stand hearing about the Zoo

But Tim in bolting off like that, had more serious matters in mind. He wanted to not be late, getting his share of the papers that were just being scrambled for, at a certain corner, by the newsboys. “ Comrade boys ” of Tim's were doing this. He had begun in a small way, doing curate to one Paddy Nouns. Paddy supplied the capital, Tim helped to dispose of the stock. As junior partner he had only a small share in the profits. But he was on his own now, working in sturdy independence.

It was while plying this trade that Tim made acquaintance with the lady of the wine-coloured eyes. She was passing him with the long springing step that

tall girls often affect, when Tim proffered her a paper.

"I don't want one, thanks," she said, without stopping.

Tim executed a flank movement, and presented himself on the other side, repeating the mute appeal.

"Go away! You're not allowed to pester people!" said Ruth; adding, "besides I've seen it already."

"Wisha then, Miss, maybe you could spare me a copper in the honour of God"

"No, I tell you I won't!" said Ruth with extreme firmness.

She was fresh from a conversation with Jack that had touched on many things.

One dictum of her youthful mentor in charitable works had stuck; and prominently.

"Every penny you give at random, simply means helping pauperisation," Jack had informed her.

The enormity of such an act was appalling. She determined to save her soul from such guilt.

"I'll give you nothing! Go away"

She was also sternly aware of her duty to Tim.

But he . . . well, when she looked at him, it was as if the very soul of Boy, irresistible, deathless, was looking at her from under that shaggy thatch; eyes sometimes merry, often wistful; always Boy.

Ruth wavered. She was passing a shop-window which displayed the notice: "Penny-dinner tickets sold here."

She indicated this to Tim.

"I can't be giving you pennies," she said, "but if I get you one of these . . . ?" tentatively.

"A penny-dinner, is it Miss? Sure that would be grand! Chuseday this is; hot skew it does be . . . lovely . . . !"

Alas for the improvidence of the rich when they are young and impulsive ! Not more than one shilling had Ruth ; and not less than a dozen tickets could be sold to her. Still . . .

" Here's your ticket," she said, emerging from the shop ; " and I hope you'll enjoy the stew ! Now I have no money left for my own lunch ! "

" Glory, Miss ! what at all will ye do ? "

" Do without, I suppose ; but what need you care ? "

The soft glance from the doll's eyes that accompanied these words robbed them of any sting. It restored Tim's soul. He smiled in sympathy, and slipped one lean hand into some fastness of rags, and produced a penny.

" Here's wan for ye, Miss . . . "

Ruth took it, warm and greasy, into her gloved hand. Tim's eyes fairly beamed with delight as she did so ; while Ruth was saying to herself, " Why doesn't his penny pauperize me ? Maybe because I don't really want it ! "

Then she said, aloud to Tim, " Why couldn't you have used that penny yourself, and got your dinner ? "

" Savin' it I was, Miss, to get the ' Evenin' Edition' ; but sure, what matter for this offer ! "

" Here, maybe you'd better take it back for that," said Ruth with a queer choke in her voice ; " I'm going home, anyway, and I can get something . . . "

" Well, whatever you say yourself, Miss," said Tim, docile but disappointed ; " you'd be kindly welcome, whatever ; and if ever you're at a short again hereabouts, just let me know, Miss . . . "

" I won't forget," said Ruth.

CHAPTER III

THE THIRD DOORSTEP

THAT shilling ! All it led to ! If only Jack had been able to trace it, how it would have backed up his lectures against giving in the street !

For, very naturally, the children's step-mother saw in this happening the prospect of easily-got money. She therefore began sending them out to "beg their bit." The worse the weather, the more miserable their looks, the better were their chances. Dinny, shivering and breakfastless was a trump-card.

There are so many tender-hearted people to whom the sight of a pale neglected child makes a strong appeal ! They get a most uncomfortable feeling, utterly at variance with the

"All's well with the world"

conviction that should be theirs. Such disturbance is the crumpled rose-leaf in their couch of plump content. Distressful pity brought face to face with pitiful distress . . . isn't the simplest remedy for both, the bestowal of a few coppers ? You ease your heart, and maybe your purse too by ridding it of its bulky small-change ; your impulse acting like anti-fat

But what of the hand that receives the doles ? Bride and Dinny were little the better of them. Their father had disappeared ; and good riddance of bad

rubbitch, it was said. All the same, he had now and then earned a trifle, and the children had had an ostensible claim on share of that. Now there was nothing to depend on, but the lodgers ; and the rent accounted for most of that. The second Mrs. Doran therefore, reversing the accepted order of things, began to depend upon the callow breasts of those two young pelicans, Bride and Dinny, for her support, instead of feeding them from her own.

“ What yiz done once, yiz can do again,” she would say ; and would exact nightly tribute from them in a forcible way that would not be denied.

Granny beheld this with helpless grief. She would gladly have got them down again to share the cellar with her, but their step-mother wouldn't do without their earnings.

These varied in amount. Sometimes they did fairly well ; then there would be peace of a kind for them. But sometimes not one of the many who brushed by the two young Dorans, standing forlornly at some corner, would cast a thought upon them ; let alone a penny ; which under the circumstances described, would have been better. It would have given temporary relief anyway. As time went on, and their step-mother grew case-hardened to this mode of making a living, the children learned to dread returning empty-handed to her at night.

“ I'd say, the theatre would be yer best dart,” advised Tim one evening, when Brigit acknowledged to complete pennilessness and a consequent disinclination for home ; “ the coppers does be middlin' plenty there betimes. Hoarse I do be, meself, crying the evening papers, and calling cabs and cars for the

Quality. They do be tired and sleepy goan home after the play's over. Middlin' short in the timper some of them do be, too. Still in all, you'll manage to knock some little thing out of them . . . but what'll you do wid Dinny? He'll never keep awake till then; after eleven it does be . . ."

"Sure what at all!" said Bride, hopefully as this prospect was unfolded to her; "what's to ail him only come along with us? He'd be afeard to go home wid only himself. And the rain's over now. Why wouldn't he be as well off there at the theatre as anywhere else?"

"Ay sure, and betther," said Tim.

The three children therefore made their way, cold, wet, hungry and very tired, towards the theatre. The rain had ceased, but everything was damp, and a searching, chill wind blew in their faces. The mud was ankle-deep in the gutters, and as they fled across a street they had to flounder through one of these foul streams, to avoid a car dashing swiftly by. But it was something to be thankful for, that they had escaped with only that.

"Dinny that's a rale Snaky-boots!" commented Tim, with good-humoured scorn; "well the two of us had him between us, or we'd never have got him from under that horse's feet. You have to be middlin' smart here if you're out late . . . The theatre should be nigh-hand over by this," said the experienced youth; "let the two of yous get into the shelter of this door, out of the wind. There's no one will pass any remarks, for it doesn't ever be opened, only if there's a fire; and then I hear it's what it wouldn't open *for* them and let them do their livin' best . . .

"A fire! I wisht to God there was!" returned the ignorant Brigeen; "for we're dhreeped to the skin already!" and she began shaking the cape, from the fringes of which the wet was dripping in runnels. Just then, Dinny began to cry to go home; so the little woman sat her down on the doorstep, cold and muddy, and hugged him close in her small embrace; and there Dinny soon sobbed himself into forgetfulness of his woes. There she sat, patient and uncomplaining, while Tim gaily skirmished here and there about the street.

"Look-at-here!" he said gleefully, coming back to Brigit, who was rousing her tired faculties into spasmodic interest in the crowds beginning to pour out of the theatre; "didn't I tell you! It's great being here! We'll soon have enough . . . only a body doesn't like to miss e'er a chance . . . I'm after getting four outsides to call . . . the weight of them is wort' tuppence to me . . . Want a car, sir? Or is it a cab you'll be wantin' for Herself, and it such a hard night? Will I, your honour? will I . . .?"

And then Tim caught sight of wine-coloured eyes; for who were these but Doctor Jack and Miss Brabazon. And the two of them were just walking along talking and laughing and in no hurry whatever, though the rain had begun again, worse than before.

"Be off!" said Jack, tinglingly aware of what the title Tim had bestowed upon Ruth implied, and half afraid of what she might think of it. . . ("Herself!" . . . Hang that brat . . .) "take yourself out of that, or I'll give you in charge! You've been pestering me all over the place . . . Be off now! you've no business here at this hour!"

No business! It's little he knew . . . !

But Tim prudently drew back and darted away in search of other gains. Ruth and Jack, pacing slowly along, were passing the doorway in which Bride and Dinny were crouching together, and peeping forth now from under the clammy cape, with eyes that brightened as the young lady stopped, and stooped a little towards them. A lamp close by shone full on their faces.

"Why it's you two again!" said Ruth, recognising them; "don't you remember, " to Jack, "that day . . . you know . . . we took them to the Zoo?"

Jack remembered it very well . . . for reasons of his own. But all he said was, "You wanted to dine them, and I told you you couldn't"

"Don't be rubbing it in!"

"Not if you can see the thing properly now. . . ."

"As if there could be two opinions about feeding hungry children! You know perfectly well yourself"

"Oh, I take it all back, every word, only let's be getting along out of the rain.

Ruth took no notice of this, but addressed herself to Brigit with what she felt to be commendable severity.

"Don't you know you shouldn't have that child out so late?" she demanded in a tone that astonished the little girl, so much that the ready lie actually failed her, and she only looked down again, and pulled the cape more closely round Dinny.

"What on earth are you doing away from home at this hour, anyway?" said Jack, impatiently.

Dear, dear! Why were they all wanting to know

that ! As if a body would be out then if they could help it ! But Jack only wanted to cut short an interview that he knew would lead to nothing ; except maybe a cold for Ruth. He himself was too familiar with the streets at night to be at all surprised at seeing the children there ; and what were you going to do about it ?

" It's what they do be out, looking for an odd copper, sir," said Tim, eddying back to his protégés ; " and Bride that does have to bring that young fellah wid her, for fraid he'd be too troublesome at home. But sure, sir, we'll all be goan off now, the same as yourselves, sir "

" Away with you, then ! " said Jack, adding to Ruth, " we really must get on after the others . . . "

Ruth was fumbling in a small, impossible kind of silken bag that hung at her waist.

Jack saw this.

" Do come on ! Don't you know the very worst thing you can do for the poor is, to give alms like that ? "

" I hear *you* saying it," said Ruth, " and of course I don't pretend to be clever and understand things ; but . . . I do think people are simply brutes . . . Those little creatures, sitting outside, cold and wet and hungry . . . and we enjoying ourselves . . . and they not complaining a bit . . . "

" It's all true," said Jack, more gently, and thus he prevailed.

Bride was watching anxiously the white-gloved hand half-way into the bag. One penny ! She was sure Miss Ruth wouldn't miss it, and then their dismal wait would be over Tim would have some to

add to it, and they might creep into their lair for that night, in something like peace ; just one penny !

But here was Jack, taking Ruth by the arm, timidly as if fearing a rebuff, and she yielding and moving away with him . . .

Brigit's hopes fell ; then flickered up again. Miss Ruth was hurrying back.

" There ! these can't do any moral harm, anyway ! " she said, and dropped a lot of chocolates into Bride's hand ; the remains of an offering from Jack of proportions too vast for immediate consumption and calling for another fast on the part of that youth.

As she rejoined Jack, " It was only those sweets, your honour," she said, deprecatingly.

" And did you go back all that way, just . . . "

" Yes indeed ! fancy ! And so generous : giving what I couldn't use myself ! But, oh dear ! " she went on, with a choke again in her voice, " the delight of them ! Dinny actually laughed, a slow little laugh it was, when Bride put a sweet into his mouth, and before she tasted one herself ! That was the worst of it ! They seemed so contented there, as if they scarcely felt their misery . . . "

" Well, would you fret less for them, if they fretted more for themselves ? Would that mend matters, if they were crying over their woes instead of . . . You only double your own troubles if you keep pitying yourself . . . "

" Oh, you're very philosophical ! " said Ruth ; and then they walked away from the children and the cold and discomfort, and began talking about the play . . .

Presently Tim came back, looking crestfallen for once. " What at all's on ye, Tim ? " said Brigit ;

" here, take yer share" and she proffered him some sweets.

" Sure, what good's in the lek of that ! " said Tim, gloomily ; " and me after losing every blessed fargin I had "

" Glory, Tim, what come over ye ? "

" Meself and Paddy Nouns that got into hoults there beyant . . . just thrickin' we wor ; and behould ye, a big ruffin of a chap come up and catches me by the back of the neck, and begins tellin' me not to be murtherin' Paddy . . . and he well able for two of me ! Well, howsumever he managed it, when I got to twist meself away from him divel a penny but was gone ! All swep' from me . . . "

Bride looked at him despairingly.

" What will we do now ! " she said.

" Troth I dunno ! only there's little good in stopping here "

Brigit set Dinny on his feet, took him by the hand, and the three children began wandering aimlessly along.

" If we had even the price of a pint on us an' we goan back," said Brigit, " she wouldn't be barging and fighting so bitther "

" No more she wouldn't ; there's the way wid the weight of them," agreed Tim. He, too, had experience of a relative of bibulous tendencies.

" Nor doesn't want so much to eat, either," Brigit went on. Before they could pursue this theme further, Tim had darted off in pursuit of a likely-looking passer-by on the other side of the street. As he did so, " There's the young Doctor again ; let you be asking him, Dinny "

"Won't you give us a copper, your honour, in the love of God and all His holy saints!" said Dinny, repeating the petition in a whimper which had often been found very successful.

"I will not!" said Jack, stopping to look down at the children; "but I'll tell you what I'll give—give you in charge and see if that will stop you from growing up into regular beggars . . . Policeman, Here . . .!" hailing a quite imaginary member of that exemplary force. Of course he was not forthcoming; and as Bride and Dinny disappeared with magic speed, "There!" Jack muttered to himself; "it's hard on the kiddies, I know! I'd catch it hot from Ruth if she heard me. But where's the sense in encouraging them to beg!"

"Bad cess to him, wid his po-lis-man!" said Brigit, standing breathless in the dark archway to which she had dragged Dinny to avoid the wrath of Jack; and immediately the children had rushed forth again . . . there were others in the archway, evil-mouthed, dreadful. The children were terrified, and only too glad to escape to the lamp-lit streets from them.

"What at all will we do now, Brigeen?" asked Dinny; "there's scarce as much as one left in the street . . . maybe if you had even a ha'penny she'd let us in for this offer, it's that cowl . . ."

"Well, I haven't it," said Brigit, who was shaking all over, with terror as well as chill; "but don't you take to go cry, whatever you do! Come along this way; it's mostly at this corner Tim does be and he'll come back maybe to look for us. . . . An' how well nothing ud serve that young fellah of a doctor, only ordering us about: walking along as if the whole of

Dublin belonged to him ! Ha, much about him in his brass hat ! ”

This epithet, full of occult scorn, in some way restored to Brigit some of her usual pluck.

“ Never say die ! while there’s mait on the shin of a wran ! ” she said, quoting one of Granny’s traditional sayings from the County Clare, the point of which was really lost upon the little town-sparrows. But they appreciated its spirit. With a spark of renewed hope, they wandered on, and presently found themselves in the big Square, not far from Miss Ruth’s home.

“ It won’t be so lonesome here,” said Bride, and she settled herself and Dinny under the protection of a great tree that stretched its arms from the Gardens out a bit across the street.

They were then opposite the Brabazon house. By some carelessness a blind had been disarranged, so that the children could see what was going on inside. It interested them greatly.

“ That ould fellah, sittin’ by the fire, and he the full of the big chair . . . that should be the doctor himself,” explained Brigit ; “ and . . . look Dinny ! sittin’ on the arm of the chair, do ye see ! that’s Miss Ruth, that’s after giving us the sweets . . . and had us in the Zoo, and . . . Och ! the beautiful frock she has on ! and the shining hair . . . and the jools . . . ” Young Bride sighed, but it was with keen delight in these lovely things, not with envy. It was all too far away for that. Dinny unclosed eyes heavy with sleep, to look as he was told ; then laid his head on Bride’s shoulder again.

By degrees the lights in the big house were put out,

one by one, beginning with the lower rooms. Brigit then saw a blind being raised, quite high up. Miss Ruth was standing there, looking out into the night, and smiling to herself very happily.

And that was the moment that Dinny chose to stir with a sudden movement that somehow attracted the young lady's gaze. And when it fell on the two small figures below, bearing Jack's admonition in mind, she leant out, and called to them, bidding them "go home at once like good children!"

Obediently Brigit led Dinny away, for a few paces; then, seeing that Miss Ruth had disappeared, they ventured back to their former position under the tree.

"Go home, indeed!" said Bride; "sure how can we! What a thing she bids us do! Much she knows about it!"

She did her best to comfort Dinny by hugging him as closely to her as she could, but Dinny, worn out between sleep and the hunger that kept him awake, began a hopeless wailing of pure misery.

Then the young lady showed herself again. All in white she was, with loosened hair falling about her shoulders. She peered out and down through the darkness. Bride dropped her head upon Dinny's, but if she thought by this to escape notice, she was mistaken.

"And is it there you are still!" Ruth called softly down to them. In spite of the gentleness of the voice, Brigit thought she was going to be scolded again, and she was wretched enough by then to begin crying herself, although as a rule she well deserved Granny's encomium of being "a rale manly little girleen." Miss Ruth, who had left the window, quickly appeared

there again. It was getting on into the small hours. The Square was silent and deserted. Every word from Ruth fell clear as a bell to the children below through the darkness.

"Why are you here so late?" she asked.

"Sure what else, Miss!" said Bride; "we got ne'er a copper at all to-night, howsumever the thing happened out so bad with us."

"And is it that you're going to stop here all night!"

"What else, Miss!" repeated Brigit; "and not too bad off at all . . . , has the finest of shelter . . ."

Then Miss Ruth wrapped something round with a handkerchief and flung it forth. It fell close to where Brigit was sitting with Dinny on her knee.

"Take that and go home, for God's sake!" said the young lady. There was a sob in her voice.

Bride needed no second bidding. She pounced on the parcel, white and soft and fragrant from the violets (presented by Jack) which Ruth had been wearing; she opened it with fingers stiff from cold, and discovering money inside, took Dinny once more by the hand and sped away with him at a run.

"And they're laughing! Laughing!" said Ruth to herself; "they don't know anything but this awful life! They think these things are natural. . . . But what's bringing them trotting back? Can they have dropped it! Or didn't I throw down enough? If that's it, I declare I'll simply ask them how much . . . in spite of Jack and his old theories! Out in the street all night . . . and I . . ."

She looked back into the room at her bed, soft and luxurious; then forth again. The children were back once more. Brigit was speaking, but with caution,

THE THIRD DOORSTEP

"for fraid" some one else might hear and drive them away. But what she said reached Miss Ruth.

"It's what we forgot to say 'Thank-ye Miss!' and we ax your pardon, only we were in that big a hurry to get home. Sure now we'll be let in, and no more said. And we pray the Lord may look down upon you and them you love, and that He may clothe you with the tender eyes of His grace; and that you may have heaven here below, and may have love . . ."

With this further echo from Granny and the County Clare, they scampered away. Miss Ruth rubbed the tears from her eyes and went to bed.

"What would Jack say! Maybe he's right . . . But I wonder what one ought to do. Can it really be so very wrong to give things to children like that? Jack says . . ."

In truth Jack and his ideas, rather than the children, those embodiments of many problems, occupied Ruth's meditations that night. But so closely were they connected in her mind that although Jack didn't always suggest the children, the children invariably suggested Jack. This was fortunate for the young Dorans; for thus did they present themselves in attractive guise. With Jack, while he felt that Ruth was not always discreet, he knew that she was dear. And his profession has a way of bringing out what is best in anyone.

What Ruth had done for the children began in a passing whim, partly kindness, and partly an odd streak of unconventionality that was ingrain. She liked experiments; not with any tiresome desire after "originality," but because she was full of interest in things around her. But beyond and beneath these

things, being young and gay, she was happy herself and liked to make other people happy too. If she made mistakes, was it her fault that she knew so little of what goes on across the great gulf fixed by Ignorance between rich and poor? She never heard Mr. Doran, for example, bemoaning himself as having "the appetite of a li'n and no means of satisfying it. And sure a poor man will enjoy a good bit the same as the big fellahs that's always employing their time about races and cards when they're not at their dinners. Ay indeed, there's the way! But the rich has no houl't, only in this world!"

And to such talk Mrs. Molally would respond, "Sure, don't we all have our troubles, glory be to God that sends all, and if we don't have grief, how will we know Him! And has just to take whatever He sends and be thankful to Him. Ay, even the rich high-up lords and their ladies has to stand their chances. They get their share as well as the poor. But welcome be the will of God, and the will of man can't abate that!"

It was in this spirit of content and acquiescence with things as they are, that Granny accepted for herself and the children a very wonderful offer. This was nothing less than an invitation from Miss Ruth to come to tea with her on a certain afternoon. Yes! they would come, that very day. By the very happiest of chances, Mrs. Doran would be away, and to go unnonst would be a triumph.

It was August weather, hot and dry. Ruth, returning from a pleasant morning among chiffons and lace, had been filled with pity for Bride and Dinny, sitting white and spent on the dusty, sunheated doorstep of the old house, trying to get shade from one of the great

pillars. A little further on she had encountered Mrs. Molally, toiling along with her basket of fruit. She had thereupon lightened that load as well as her own pitying heart, by not only purchasing liberally, but by handing back a liberal share of her buying, with "You may's well just bring these to the children. I saw them sitting outside, trying to get a breath of air"

"Well, God bless you, Miss! Indeed and I will bring them . . . And wishes you the best of luck for the way you do always be thinking of the poor . . ." She refrained from mention of the portion of her wares already set aside for Brigit and Dinny; unsaleable but not unwholesome.

Ruth passed on to her home with the comforting feeling that a kindness done leaves behind. And thus she came into the beautiful Square, spacious and imposing, with its central pleasaunce of flowers and grass and well-ordered paths, and its pleasant shade, all perfect, and at what cost of labour and thought! To keep green that grass, what water had been squandered! And not a stone's throw away, that fetid street choking with dust! And never a bath, Ruth thought, for the children. . . . The contrast between the sweet surroundings of her home and the stifling squalor she had just glimpsed was disquieting. And that back street had been crowded, humming with child-life. The Square gardens were almost deserted.

Ruth was full of indignation with she didn't well know what, only she wanted to do something to better conditions for such as Dinny and Brigit. And thinking of it all she went into the fine home she had always known, and changed into a cool flowing white

frock, and came downstairs, fresh and dainty, to dine with her father in the big, handsome dining-room. Just the two of them, sitting together at a well-chosen, well-cooked meal, servants to wait and anticipate every want.

It was then that Ruth had made that plan for giving her friends in the tenement-house share for even an hour or so in some of the good things that had always been hers. But some instinct had made her defer mentioning the scheme, till she had given the invitation and it had been accepted. Then she was committed to it. It was unessayed ground, but there could be no turning-back.

She plumed herself on her wariness, one morning, when on broaching the subject to her father, he had said, "Nonsense, child! You have no right to do such a thing! Bring a crowd of ragamuffins into the Square! And what are all the children to do, pray, that play there every day!"

("As if that wouldn't be all the more reason . . . as if they mightn't give it up for a couple of hours!" Ruth said, but to herself.)

Aloud she replied: "But, father, almost everyone is out of town, except ourselves; so that it wouldn't interfere really with anyone much. . ."

"You're not to do it, child!"

Ruth jumped with amazement! Father speaking like that! and he that was kindness itself to his poor patients . . . But she said nothing, only coloured a little; and then the big doctor put his hand into his pocket and pulled out some notes and said, "There—there! don't mind me! I'm worried . . . a bad case I have . . . Here, it's a long time since I gave you

any stray fees . . . buy yourself a new frock . . ."

"Oh, thank you, Father! but really I didn't want all that. . . and I've just got all the frocks I want."

"Well, then, buy anything you fancy—only don't bother me again about bringing people from the slums into the Square! It's not ours, you know; and it wasn't meant for them. You can't do these Quixotic things. It's no use putting notions into poor people's heads. It only makes them discontented. I'm older than you are, and I know it never does to take people out of that station in life . . . what now does the Catechism say? Eh? You see I've not forgotten it all yet! And you may take my word for it, the men that put that Catechism together knew what they were about! There's no real practical kindness in these new-fangled ideas; and . . . and what's that text about putting new wine into old bottles?" he ended, triumphantly.

"But father, I've . . . they're asked already; and they are so delighted . . ."

"What? Hang it all, Ruth, you can't do it!" He broke out flaming again into wrath.

"I won't then, Father . . . I'll . . ." Ruth was half frightened at his excitement.

"But you've promised . . . how are you going to get out of it?" he said, tremulously now.

"I . . . I can manage. I . . ." with a brilliant inspiration, "why, I can take them into our back garden! I may do that, mayn't I?"

"Oh, child, do whatever you like; only don't worry me, and let me have the place to myself, when I come home at night . . ."

The place to himself! And those others . . .?

"I'm getting old, Ruth! your Dad isn't the man he was!"

"He's just the best and the dearest of dads; and it's young he's growing . . . They'll only be here for an hour or two . . ." she assured her father; "they'll be gone before you come back . . ."

But the doctor, as if he wanted to avoid agitating subjects, pushed hastily past Ruth and went forth to his daily anxieties.

"Poor Father!" Ruth thought, as he looked back to wave his hand to her from his seat in the motor; "indeed he doesn't look well! If only he'd take as good care of himself as he does of his patients . . .! I wish I'd never thought of this plan. I hate going against him! Why should he be bothered? He does enough for the poor as it is . . . that is, when they're sick. If only some one would start a plan for keeping them from getting these terrible illnesses . . . Jack says they only escape, those that do, because they grow immune . . . certainly it's interesting the things he talks about . . ."

However, it's likely any subject Jack chose, shoes or ships or sealing-wax, cabbages or kings, would have been interesting to Ruth.

Such was the prelude to her entertainment. The change of plan necessitated by her father's opposition was not difficult. She knew her guests would be pleased with anything she offered them. In the result, she was convinced they rather preferred the privacy of the back garden to the more public joys of the Square. It was an agreeable novelty to be where people couldn't be watching you, every hand's turn!

She named an hour that she calculated would not

interfere with the household routine. But somewhat to her discomfiture, the little party appeared, radiant with smiles, with more than the punctuality that is the politeness of Kings ; they were half-an-hour too soon. Beaming and full of confidence in the goodwill of their young lady, there they were, Granny resplendent in a brand-new checky apron, stiff and brilliant, while Brigit and Dinny had faces and hands scrubbed to painful cleanliness. The more glaring rents in their clothes had been drawn together with white cotton, and their hair had undergone severe discipline. Now this early arrival was somewhat disconcerting to Ruth ; such happenings are, in her class, to guest as well as hostess. But this little party from the slums felt no awkwardness. They were too sure of their kind Miss Ruth and the welcome they knew she would have for them, to do anything but be happy.

"We're ready dressed since ten this morning, Miss," Granny explained ; "lepping mad they were to get off ; they were that anshis to be here . . ."

"Of course ; and I'm delighted you were able to come so early, said Ruth ; quite truthfully, too, though it was a convention to say so. But, as she expressed it later to Jack, it was very flattering to find your guests so anxious to lose none of the entertainment provided, instead of coming, like ordinary society people, as late as possible.

She led them into the garden at once, past the door of the dining-room, which had witnessed the discomfiture of Dinny. And this was a great relief to the fears which the little boy had been enduring in silence because it was what Brigeen might take to laugh at him, if he told her about them.

In speechless excitement, then, did Ruth's guests follow her into the strip of garden that lay behind her home. Truth to tell, it was no very inviting retreat. She had tried to beautify it by planting shrubs and flowers therein, but more zeal than skill had guided her efforts. There are many town-ey gardens like this, with disadvantages that only patience and experience can overcome. Ruth possessed neither attribute, and you can't beg, borrow or steal them. Thus it was that Ruth's back-garden remained what Mrs. Molally would have called a "heart-scald" to her; a constant irritation. She couldn't help contrasting its starved, ill-grown aspect, with the beautiful Square gardens over the way. Again she wished she could have had her company there!

She needn't have worried.

"Well, dear, but this is the complete little spot!" said Mrs. Molally, looking round with an admiring eye; "just a walkin' heaven, as a body might say! You should be very glad and happy in yourself, Miss Ruth acushla, having it to yourself, and not wan to make nor meddle you, here. But indeed it's not more than you're worthy of; no, nor half as good as I'd wish ye!"

"Do you like it?" she said, with a softening at her heart, that indeed was not very hard to start with.

"Sure, how could you but like it!" said the old woman, simply; "it's that nate and tasty! And the grand fresh smell . . . from them ferr-ens you have beyant there it's coming . . . I declare to the Holy Mother of God, I could nigh-hand imagine meself to be at home again in the County Clare, and streeling

along to Mass of a fine summer's morning. It was a-by the bog we'd mostly go, wid the dark pools of water, and the rushes and heather It all comes into me mind now, in this grand little place ! ”

This praise was a lucky hit ; for the one thing Ruth had not failed abjectly about there was the sunless sheltered corner in which she had planted the ferns that Mrs. Molally praised. That praise ! Without a tinge of envy ! It put Ruth to the blush.

“ I'm sorry I couldn't take you into the Square itself as I planned,” she said ; “ but I couldn't manage it. . . . ”

“ Och what at all ! aren't we full as well off here, and betther, sure, for haven't we the whole place to ourselves ! ”

And this is how Ruth came to realise a little of what the want of privacy means. You may get used to it, but you can't well enjoy it. It therefore occurred to her now that her guests might like to be quite alone ; that even her presence might be a restraint. So she excused herself . . . there really was an errand that had been interrupted by that somewhat previous arrival. When she was done with it, she stole a glance from behind a curtain to see how her company fared. She was a bit nervous. She needn't ; Granny had shown the mind that was in them.

I think it is Mr. Barrie who says it takes two to make a joke ; the joker and the man that sees the point. The same may be said of an entertainment. To its success, a good guest is as necessary as a good host. Charm you never so wisely, your trumpiest card will fail to score in this game if your partner won't play up to your lead. But these three visitors

made things easy, by their evident enjoyment ; unlike that

“ . . . party in a parlour
All silent and all damned,”

Ruth found Dinny and Brigit extracting much joy from the simple device of walking along the tiling that edged the flower-border. This game appeared without rules ; only some deep disgrace attached to the slipping off altogether from that difficult footing. Yet up and down they went untiringly, bubbling over with unaccountable fun ; while Granny, having come to anchor on a seat close to the ferns was enjoying with closed eyes the perfume from them that brought her back to the County Clare.

Then Ruth produced what was to have been the great feature of the day. Tea was borne to the garden, by the great big fellah of a sarvint ; tea set forth duly and daintily with delicate china and silver ; heaping platefuls of cakes and other edibles.

“ Ah dear ! ” sighed Granny, with an air of intense satisfaction ; “ them’s the lovely tay-things ! God be wid the ould times, when first I went out to sarvice and I a slip of a thing ; and I used to be let help to wash up in the butler’s pantry the weeny little cups and things they’d be using, bekase them all seen the light hand I had ; you wouldn’t b’lieve that now, would you ? ” she ended inviting attention to the knotted, weather-beaten fingers wherewith she was balancing a saucerful of Miss Ruth’s delicious tea, “ and it wid crame in it, no less ! ” so Tim was afterwards assured.

“ But the children aren’t getting on with the cakes ! ”

said Ruth ; " and if they don't I'll think I didn't get what you all liked ! "

" Ora, not at all, Miss," said Granny ; " no indeed, but good and good again, they are ! But you see, Miss Ruth," speaking lower, so that the children who had been given their tea a little apart, that they might be the more unrestrained, couldn't hear, " it's what they haven't the fashion of eating too much at the one time, and seeing all that grand complement of cakes might have them da'nted . . . sure it bates the world how you imagined to get them all . . . "

" I expected they'd eat all before them, simply wolf it down," said Jack that evening, when Ruth told him this feature of the entertainment. He had happened in for that oft-recurring few minutes that had such a trick of lengthening out.

" Well, they didn't ! Maybe that's the etiquette of their class."

" Might be imitated in ours, and do no harm," said Jack ; " did you ever just watch what boys and girls . . . ay, or older people will get away with, having lunch out . . . if they get what they like that is."

" It's what they go there for," said Ruth ; " you were young once yourself. But with these children, you see, the climax, the crowning glory of the thing, I thought was to have been the feed. And when they were done so soon, I was puzzled what to do next. And they didn't seem in any hurry to go . . . "

" Well, what *did* you do ? Sent a query to some blithering ladies' paper, ' Etiquette for embarrassed hostess. . . ?' "

" Rubbish ! Granny wouldn't simply *let* you be

embarrassed ! And I had an inspiration ; asked them would they like to see the house. It was the luckiest thing ! Granny said, they wouldn't wish to be troublesome, but their eyes were dancing. So I brought them in and told them to go where they liked . . ."

" What ! And all the doctor's treasures . . . !"

" Jack, you don't understand ! Mrs. Molally . . . she's an old dear, and if she's not a lady at heart, well, ' lave it there ! ' as she'd say herself. She took the children in charge, and they went about hand-in-hand. I told the servants to keep out of the way and I did the same myself."

" Did they make any comment ? "

" Why," said Ruth, " I overheard Granny saying as they were coming downstairs, with a comfortable little laugh, ' I'm thinking it's what our own little places will appear very quare to us, after all this ! ' and Brigit chimed in, ' Ay, and to say there's only the two of them in this big imminse house ! Rooms apiece they have, let alone beds, and even some over that there seems to be no one for . . . ' ' Them's for visitors ! ' Granny explained. ' I'd think it to be lonesome ! ' Brigit said . . . and by then they were passing that old Italian cabinet father and I brought home last year ; and little Dinny begged to be let wait there to see ' all them curey-careys ; did ever a body see the like or think there'd be that many grand things in the one house . . . and plates against the wall, all vari'gated in red and gold and ladies and gentlemen upon them . . . ' "

" Ought to compile a catalogue of the Doctor's curios," suggested Jack

“ And then Granny said, ‘ Well, well, sure there’s no end to the wonders of the wit of man ! But there we are now at the end of all the scenery of the place, though we’ve only sketched it, and no more. But come on now, we mustn’t be taking up all Miss Ruth’s time ; mind ye, it’s bad to be wearing out yer welcome !’ So they took leave, and even Dinny had courage to thank me ; and the last I heard from Granny was her wish that every hair on my head might be a mowld candle to light me to glory.”

CHAPTER IV

THE THEATRE DOORSTEP

LET no one suppose that the nomad life of such as the young Dorans is altogether unattractive. It's not dull. There is a chanciness about it that gives it life and colour. Rags and bare feet and even hunger are things you get used to. The human frame is adaptable, and seems capable of going without to a marvellous extent ; seems, I say, for often it gives way suddenly, without apparent reason for failure just then. Just as it has got itself down to a straw a day, it ceases, like a machine exhausted for want of oil or fuel. As Granny had said of the first Mrs. Doran, " she took and died, years upon top of years before there was any call for she to go do the lek."

Hunger was the worst and most insistent of the foes Bride and Dinny had to contend with ; but then, so much the sweeter the chancey morsels furnished forth, now here, now there for their craving young appetites. And once out of sight of their step-mother, they were fairly free to come and go and do as they pleased. The only check imposed upon their liberty of action was in respect of that nightly tribute. Then they could be all day in the air ; such as it was ! This has its advantages ; though Bride and Dinny may not always have appreciated them. Unlimited fresh air, to be enjoyable in winter for example, needs filtering, through fur and flannel, for choice. But these children were hardened without either

Forth would they scamper, as early as they could, from the tempestuous atmosphere of their noisy, noisy "home," to wander about, always together and always hand-in-hand. This link was merely habit yet it stood for something more; it typified Brigit's guardianship, and Dinny's clinging thereto; as if her hand embodied everything of strength and protection he needed.

"Goan about like two little goats that you'll see spanshelled by the side of the road, they do be," Mrs. Molally would remark to Miss Julia, "and not too bad off at all in their own little way of getting on. Sure, when they go cadge, there's no one but should give to Dinny, and the big, longin'-lookin' eyes of him!"

"That woman above there is a holy terror!" said Miss Julia, "rale contrary she is betimes, as cross as a briar."

"That does mostly only be when she'll have a few jolts of whiskey taken," said Granny, apologetically; "God help them that's under the rule of drink! Sure half their time they'll not know what they're doing or saying; and so by her. But I put the children on the have-a-care, when she's that way. So they know to not annoy her or give any back talk, only I've her way and come down here to me unnonst. . . Sure they do be company for me! I wisht to God I had them altogether!"

"It's no right way to be having a decent woman's children," said Miss Julia, shaking her head with its tightly twisted neat grey hair. And then she departed to her work, and Granny began preparing for her rounds, with the soliloquy, "Sure a body must only be doing the best they can."

The children had not failed to follow Tim Carty's advice anent the theatre. It proved as a general thing a happy hunting-ground for them. And now they were to find that this mysterious building had something to offer, even better than the stray coppers that had attracted them thither.

A golden opportunity presented itself there, of advancement in life for Brigeen. That it afforded no permanent advantage was no fault of hers, or of the hand that offered it.

It happened in this wise : The giver of that wonderful shilling having left Dublin on tour soon after, appeared there again in due season ; Bride and Dinny having meantime graduated in the gentle art of street-begging. Plying this calling one night near the theatre Brigit thus addressed a big, strong-looking kind of a gentleman, and he done up in a fur coat :

" In the love of God and all His holy angels, would your honour throw us a copper ! And that you and yours may never want ! The father that's after dying ' on ' us ; and our mother in hospital ; five more of us at home and goan to be turned out for the rent that's owing . . . "

The gentleman turned to look down at them. It was the giver of that wonderful shilling ! And as if all that wasn't wonderful enough, what do you think but he actually remembered Brigit !

" Isn't this the little dancing girl ? " he said ; " to be sure ! I never forget a face ! But what brings you here so late ? You ought to be tucked up and asleep now ! "

" It's terrible hard to make the Quality " sinsible ! " Brigit thought again. You'd think they should know

better and not be talking foolishness like that ! What at all ! would he like to be doing it himself, if he . . if he . . .

Young Bride got no farther. How could she or anyone in their seven senses be able to fancy such a warm, comfortable person as the comely actor in her or Dinny's . . . shoes, I was going to say, only they hadn't any . . .

It was a thing impossible ; for the ordinary man in the street, that is. But this actor being a man who had made his own of many parts, could realise something of the state of affairs ; all the more vividly because it wasn't himself he put in the place of these children. He just thought of his own little ones, of their beautiful mother, in the home he had provided for them, with every comfort that love and money could buy ; nothing was too good for them. And he shivered in his furs, and his heart ached as he looked at the ill-clad, ill-fed little pair.

Then he began asking Brigit about herself. And his eyes and voice were so kind, that Brigeen found herself telling him the truth ; at least a good deal of what she said was true.

It's not easy to tell everything. She may have felt that the unadulterated truth wouldn't answer wid a gentleman. But anyway, when he had heard her out, the actor looked very kindly at her and said, "That's not a very good life for you ! Wouldn't you like to have something better than begging to do ? —something that you could do, I think very well, and be paid for doing—that is, if you're a good girl and do all you're told and take pains ? And then you needn't be wandering about so late with the little

brother . . . well, what do you say to that idea ? ”

He had to wait for the reply ; and then it came : “ Sure, whatever is plasing to yer honour yourself ! ” murmured Brigit, too much overcome with amazement to be capable of more coherent answer. What at all could the gentleman be thinking about !

“ You will, then ? Well, what would be plasing to me is, for you to meet me here to-morrow morning about eleven . . . and perhaps I may be able to help you . . . but now, take this,” and he put money into Brigit’s hand, “ and for God’s sake, go home out of the dreadful streets ! ”

Ah, they needed no such bidding ! All they wanted was the wherewithal to purchase right of entry into the den they called “ home.” This their friend had supplied. Why, they wondered, had he said “ those dreadful streets ? ” They accepted them, with their filth, their grimy ugliness, their sordid, debased inhabitants ; and ought you to be glad or sorry that such children don’t dream of discontent ?

When Bride and Dinny reached their shelter, that foul and crowded room, to a corner of which they were wont to steal, they became aware that their step-mother was in no condition to impose any restraints upon them. So, having taken care to leave sufficient money in the customary place, they fled back, and down the rickety staircase, dangerous by reason of worn steps and much of the balustrade having been broken away, down, down through almost utter darkness, to Granny in her cellar.

It was cheering, that kindly presence ; the bit of fire—the candle-light. Dim though this was, it illumined a loving face. And here Brigit had the

satisfaction of relating her adventure to the old woman and Tim Carty, winding up with, "What at all should he want wid the likes of me! And even said, he'd be paying me . . .!"

"Sure, what can you do, only go and find out, acushla!" said Granny; "you never know where your luck will be waiting for ye; anyway you'll be no worse off for seeing him . . ."

"No, but betther," declared Tim, who possessed imagination, "for no one could tell what might happen! Didn't I hear it read out of a story-book one time, how that a poor boy met up wid some grand prince of a fellah that said he'd stand to him always . . . only let him do some certain thing . . . and didn't he turn out to be that boy's very father . . . so there now!"

"Och, let you whisht with yer blathering!" said Brigit, "Whose father? Such foolish talk to be getting on wid! It's too sure I am that this isn't my father, whatever! Look at the red nose *he* had upon him!"

"Ay indeed," said Granny, equably; "and a mouth the same as if it was after being made with a back-handed blow of a shovel . . . noways well-faytured the Dorans were, ever and always; as ugly as if they were bespoke . . . God rest their sowl, anyway!" Mrs. Molally broke off in a softer key. She found it hard to "go fau't anyone" let alone them that were gone. All the same, she would feel a loving satisfaction in perceiving that Bride and Dinny "favoured the mother"; Marg having been a pretty girl, of a refined, well-bred air that sometimes shows itself in a peasant's child; probably a throw-back to

some mighty ancestor. Marg's beauty had soon been blemished; weather-beaten and battered was it through storm and stress of her ill-fortune; yet she had succeeded in transmitting it to her children. The actor's interest in Bride and Dinny had not been altogether born of pity.

"We'll have our bit of supper now," said Granny, "and be off early to bed, the way we can be up in good time in the morning, so as that Brigeen will get to clane herself up and put some sort of regulation upon herself . . ."

"I'll be a holy show, whether or which!" declared Brigit, disconsolately exhibiting to better view her tattered skirts.

"Och, what at all!" soothed Granny; "can't we put a couple or three stitches into the worst of the holes, the same as when we went to Miss Ruth's, and then, when you'll have your face washed and your head racked, you'll be fit to go see the Queen!"

These words, with their suggestion of torture, were not so ill-adapted to the toilet process involved as might be supposed. To take the tangles out of thick, curly hair like Brigit's is, like matrimony, a thing not lightly to be taken in hand. Perhaps this was why it was not oftener attempted. But next morning, Brigit bore the application of the comb by Granny's unskilled fingers, with stoical resignation. The tears started, but she winked them away, and submitted patiently to the ordeal by soap and water. These trying efforts towards respectability concluded, Brigit went off to her rendezvous; Dinny of course with her. They both trembled with excitement.

Maybe it was all nonsense ! Maybe it was what the gentleman was only making sport of them !

But no ! Just as Brigit was thinking the best thing would be for them to turn about and go off, out o' that, up came their friend ; and not late at all. It was Brigit that was " foreninst her time."

He greeted them in the same good-natured way, and at once led them across the very doorstep upon which they had so often seated themselves ; through many queer, narrow passages, into a small room where another gentleman was sitting writing with heaps and heaps of letters on the desk before him. And Brigit's friend explained the thing to him, the while the little girl stood, Dinny's hand clasped tightly in hers, and feeling all legs and elbows as she was being critically looked at.

"I think she'd do, with some teaching, in the place of the child that had to give up," Brigit's friend said, and he went to a piano in a corner, and began playing a lively tune, nodding his head and smiling at Brigit all the time. As he played . . . it chanced to be a tune well-known to all the streets . . . the shyness that had fallen like a cold cloud on the little girl vanished like a morning mist before the sun. The spirit of the music possessed her. After a few vague steps she was dancing with the same wild grace that had attracted the notice of the actor some months before.

He suddenly stopped playing, ending on a chord as big as himself, and looked enquiringly at the other man, who just nodded and said, " Yes, I think she ought to do ! But she must begin at once . . . I'll see about it . . . I don't suppose there will be any objection . . ." and he began writing again like one

possessed ; while Brigit's friend said to her, " You don't understand ? Well, this gentleman and I think you could dance in his pantomime, and he'll get you taught . . . in the theatre, you'd be dancing . . . what do you think? Were you ever inside a theatre ?"

Brigit shook her head. She was incapable of speech. To be going to dance in the pantomime ! Sure that couldn't be ! She was so bewildered by this wonderful prospect that she became lost as in a dream, and remained standing just where she had ceased dancing, till the actor, taking her hand, led her away to another room, Dinny, of course, in tow.

" The class is going on here," he said, " and you may's well begin. You'll like it, eh ? and having a pretty frock . . ."

With that he ushered the young Dorans into a long, bare room where a lot of children were being drilled laboriously enough in various intricate steps, by a tall, cheerful-faced lady. And to her was Brigit introduced, with the remark, " Here's a pupil in place of the one you lost ; I think she'll do you credit one of these days ! "

Encouraged by this, Brigit acquitted herself well ; and when she was being dismissed, she was pronounced quite well worth teaching.

" I wish to the Lord you were in it too, Dinny ! " said Brigit as they went off hand-in-hand.

" Sure I'd not be fit," said Dinny humbly ; " but can't I be waiting for ye outside while you'll be getting taught . . ."

" Ay to be sure ! And now we'll want to run and tell Granny ! She that'll be surprised to hear . . ."

In a rapture of delight the children raced back to

impart the tale of their morning's adventure. Granny received it with the most gratifying amazement.

"Well, well! did jever hear the beat of that! What next? Singing, I wouldn't put it past ye in the theayter! But whisper, Brigeen, what about Her-self?"

"Sure she needn't know a ha'porth about it," said Bride, very resolutely, but with a tremor of anxiety in her voice.

"If that could be!" said Granny with the Irish leaning to anything savouring of intrigue; and then added, "but I dunno but it ud be as good tell her, the first go-off; then she couldn't go fau't ye, after!"

"I'll not tell her! Let her ax and go look!" said Brigit, "for if she gets wind of the word, the sarra penny of salary ever she'll let me finger!"

And this attitude of firm importance was a first effect of Brigit's improved position. Her's was now to be the dignity of a wage-earner.

"Och what at all!" thus Tim added his word to these counsels; "sure isn't it only a folly to talk! Won't the whole street have it, how that you're getting a do at the pantomime. And then she'll hear it and as like as not 'ull leather the life out of ye for not telling her"

"An' is it what you want me to be spendin' me time gettin' larnt to dance, just to airn money for her to get drink! I'll thank ye to not be talkin' foolish, Tim Carty!" said Bride with angry tears in her voice.

"Sure you're airning for her at this present," said the level-headed Tim, "and this might come far more handier"

Brigit looked from him to Granny, yieldingly

" Ay, indeed, and if we haven't enough, barging and fighting rings round her. . . . "

" Och, God help her ! " said Granny ; " she has no thought or gamut in her way of goan an ; the same as a third cousin of me own that was signal-man on the railway in the County Clare. The wife that took and died on him, and he fretted a power and turned on the drink ; would get mad, lek, betimes. But everyone had a wish for Pat he was that gay a poor fellah, and so they'd pass it off. Till one night, a train was coming along with some high-up Quality, directors or the like of that, and something went wrong that the train stopped, and hadn't for the game of cards they were playing they'd have been leppin' mad. And when they made enquiry, me poor Pat wasn't to be seen, only a good piece off at his own little place ; and had his iron bed dragged out into the praty plot and was signalling away with the slats ! So them all said it 'ud never answer to be killing that class of people ; that if it was only a train wid cattle or harvest men or ordinary passengers they'd take no notice no more nor any other time, but . . . "

" Will I be to tell her to-night ? " asked Brigit, cutting short this oft-told tale. Any of the children could have set Granny right if she had altered its manner in the slightest.

It was settled that the first opportunity should be taken to impart the great happening.

To the amazement of all concerned, it was received in the most amicable spirit by the second Mrs. Doran, who even declared Brigeen to be " a great little girleen all out ! goan to dance in the theyater, no less ! "

She even volunteered to buy her new clothes for the

dancing school. She chanced to be in a mood of extreme joviality. An American letter had arrived ; addressed, to be sure, to Brigit. But her step-mother, who was also a Brigit, had no difficulty in annexing the money it contained ; no scruples either that were not easily laid to rest by the reflection " It wouldn't answer for a child like Brigeen to get a lot of money into her hand ! and anyway wasn't it little enough to'arst the keep of the two of them ! "

The letter itself she put behind the fire, being as she often said " no scholar." Indeed the blotted scrawl was scarce decipherable. What odds, where it had come from ! She stilled the small bit of conscience she had left by the purchase of the outfit for Brigit.

The intimation of these generous intentions were received by Brigit with excited incredulity.

" What at all could have bruk a hole in her, to go do the like ! " she demanded of Tim.

" Maybe it's what she's feeling wakely in herself," replied that sage youth ; " it might be the change for death . . . "

" Whisht, whisht, children," said Mrs. Molally, " that's no right way to be talking and doesn't know the minute the Lord ud call any of us ! And that's why we should be makin' our souls whenever we get the chance "

" What do ye think will she get for me ? " queried Bride, lost in wonder.

You can easily imagine what Mrs. Doran's taste would be ! But to ragged little Brigeen, the tawdry ready-made frock, with its frills and bows represented the acme of elegance and comfort. Now she mightn't be striving to smallen herself among the other

little dancers ! she would be as good as any of them !

" If only Miss Ruth was to see you now ! " said Granny, as Brigeen in all the dazzling novelty of a new rig-out which included shoes and stockings, strutted and pirouetted about the cellar, where she and Dinny were permitted to go, to show off their step-mother's generosity.

" Sure, " said Tim, " isn't she away off wid the father in foreign parts ; he's gone there looking for his health ; in a poor way he is, they say . . . "

" Och ! how poor he is ! yer granny's night cap ! " said Brigit, with scorn ; " poor how-are-ye ! didn't I tell you how that we seen the house himself and Miss Ruth lives in, and the sight ud lave your eyes at the grandeurs of it ! Like shop-windows, the tables and side-boards wor with wealth and gold and silver . . . so how could he be poor ? "

" If it's the health that's gone, " said Miss Julia, who had been invited to step down and inspect Brigit's finery, " where's the use in all the treasures of this earthly world ! "

" I wouldn't believe the half of what Bride's after gabbing out of her ! no, nor the quarter . . . " said Tim, sturdily.

" Ha ! bekase you never seen them yerself ! " said Bride, capering defiantly round and flouting his bare legs with her elegant skirt.

" Have done now, childher, " said Granny ; " quit argufying. Sure, if Tim didn't go that day, most likely Miss Ruth will ask him the next offer. Where's that new step you have to get right, Bride, before you go to the theayter, again ? I dunno but it might go very nice to ' The Washerwoman, ' or ' Yourself along

with me on the ould fiddle . . ' God be wid the time I'd be playing for the boys and girls and they dancing at the cross-roads in the County Clare . . . Get it out for me from anundher the bed, Tim agra . . . "

Ah ! if that fiddle had the soul with which one is tempted to credit such music-makers, dear ! how it must have felt the change, from the fresh, breezy roadside, hawthorn or furze-scented, sweet and spacious, where it inspired the pure spirit of frolic and sociability, to the frowsy cellar, where little Brigit was carefully practising steps and intricate movements that were to have their commercial value. Yet something of the old joyousness remained with Granny, animating her wrinkled fingers as she played, and nodded and patted time with her foot, and would laugh aloud as she watched Brigit's light movements. These practisings became a regular thing in the cellar. Mrs. Doran was too anxious about Brigit's success to interfere, so that the children were free to be with Granny. Tim would generally happen in about then, and sometimes, very rarely though, a small figure would follow Tim to the door and stand there to look on, resisting all Granny's hospitable wiles to induce her to venture farther into the cellar. Katty the Wran was terribly deformed, but her little twisted back was partly veiled by a wealth of fair hair that hung over her shoulders, and that obscured the thin white face from out of which her dark eyes gazed forth into the world that she found so hard to live in. Some one had provided the Wran with a comfortable little brown cloak and warm shoes and stockings, but as Granny said, she wanted it all, the craythur ! goan about a-through the streets singin' at night . . .

and might be in some Home or other and maybe something could be done to stretch out her back, that's what the lady said that gev the clothes, only the poor mother wouldn't part her, and had no right way of goan an herself, only a bit of sewing, and the sight terrible bad with her this while back . . ."

The Wran had slipped away one evening, and Brigit, out of breath and tired, threw herself upon the big bed and sighed out, "Och! if only you could see it all! and me dancing in and out of the Cor'l Cave, in a white frock all hung wid diamonds, and they shining on me head in a crown like the Queen . . .! Troth the sight ud lave your eyes . . ."

"An' why couldn't we go!" said sturdy Tim, "it' ud not be so much on us for the wanst . . ."

"Would we ever have that much gothered?" said Granny, as eager as a girl at the thought.

"Why not? and if we're short itself, can't I borry it off of some of the other lads!" said Tim, "the same as they'd come to me . . ."

"It ud be great entirely, if you could be there!" said Bride; and added warningly, "but mind now, Dinny, you'll be high up, and having a long ways to be looking down at me, and you'll want to not be getting afeard . . ."

"Will you be a very *very* long ways off, Brigeen?" asked Dinny, gazing at the little dancer with big anxious eyes.

"I supose it's what you'd like her to be beside you too," said Granny, tenderly, "only how could she be up there wid you and dancing down below at the same time!"

The others laughed, and Dinny said no more.

He did not understand it. It was impossible to realise the prospect! To be allowed inside that wonderful place, the doorstep of which he had haunted so long! with music playing and it all lit up and himself and Granny and Tim looking down at Brigeen and all the wonders the glorious, unknown magnificence of the pantomime!

"It might be that Miss Ruth herself would be in it, whatever night you would be there," said Brigit.

She was still thrown upon the old bed; Tim had picked up the fiddle and was picking out an air upon it, aided by occasional hints from Granny who was combining with her musical instructions the cooking of supper. It consisted of what she called "two-eyed beef-steaks," that is, herrings, which were sizzling pleasantly in her old pan. Dinny was setting forth Granny's motley collection of tableware with a timid importance.

"Miss Ruth? Och, God knows when we'll be seeing her again! maybe not this side of the Chrissimas at all. Visiting with great high-up lords and ladies of quality, herself and the Doctor; for there's the way wid them that has to uphold high living!" said the experienced Granny.

"She that will be wondering, when she hears about me in the pantomime!" said Brigit, with a sigh of happy anticipation.

Everything now was smiling upon her. She had work that she liked; that she did well; that she was being paid for. Granny and Dinny and Tim were full of ungrudging admiration. Even Herself had begun to treat her young step-daughter with something like

respect ; except of course when she'd have a sup in, and then ye mightn't mind her . . .

Ah, if only the kind Fates that had thrown such a rosy chance into that ragged little lap had continued to smile . . . What heights might not Brigit have attained, have become a regular dancer Such promotions are not unknown to that world wherein our little waif was about to make her shy entrance. But it was not to be. By one of Life's many small ironies, that same hand that often had held out help to the young Dorans was now to dash their hopes to earth.

In the course of those journeyings with her father, "looking for his health," Ruth had come across some old school-friends in Germany who were much interested in education and social work. Their views were new to Ruth, and she had taken them up hotly.

"What about those young Dorans," she demanded of Jack, soon after her return ; "children like that abroad would be learning simply heaps of things ! two other languages"

"A fat lot of good it would do the kiddies here to be able to parley-voo ! Of course there's Irish—But no one would know what they meant . . . at least . . ."

"But do they go to school at all ? I thought when that Guild of yours took over those tenement houses, it meant looking after the children a bit . . ."

"I've been pretty busy," apologised Jack ; "I do collect the rents, though ; so I know they're there, still, the whole boiling of them ; and a nice handful that step-mother of theirs is ! I . . . we . . . we

chaps thought if we had some girls to chip in . . . do the influencing, don't you know . . ."

"I might," said Ruth, readily, "only not till after Christmas! I have such heaps and heaps of things to do! But isn't there anyone to look after the children's school attendance?"

Jack believed there was an Inspector; promised to look up his address, and sent it to Ruth.

Ruth at once set out to interview this official. On her way, she called at the old tenement house, but none of her friends were visible. Granny was out on her rounds; Bride and Dinny at the theatre, it being the hour for the dancing-lesson.

And thus it came to pass, that while our little Bride was busy executing her steps in the most skilful and praiseworthy manner, Miss Ruth was busy, taking her steps to cut short that joyful occupation. She was well pleased with the interview. The Inspector was young and enthusiastic; Ruth Brabazon's visit was an agreeable break in his official day. He promised to look after the case at once.

"Anything, anything to get the little girl away from the idle life she's leading!" Ruth said to herself, as she walked quickly homewards; I'm so glad I made no delay! If I had, dear knows when I could have done it at all! Now, she's off my mind! she'll be learning, and kept out of mischief too!"

It is all how you look at things. If only Ruth could have seen them from the cellar! But it takes people a long time to appreciate the difficulty of helping others.

"An' is it that you're not to dance in the theatre no more! What's that for at all at all!" said Granny a few days later.

"Isn't that what I'm after telling ye!" said poor Brigit, amid floods of angry tears; "how well nothing would sarve Them" (it was thus she designated the Unseen Powers that were interfering with such lamentable want of judgment in her affairs), "only go kick up a row at this present to make me go to school! What call in life have They to be meddlin' in what doesn't consarn them!"

"What about the others? Is the whole of yous stopped?"

"No, only a couple or three along with me," answered Brigit; "I dunno rightly, but it appears the weight of them does be at night-school . . . I got a whimper about it too, but sure I never heeded . . ."

"Why would ye?" said Granny comfortingly.

"Sure you had a right to be the same as the rest," announced Tim; "a night-school does be great . . ."

"Ha! how smart we are!" said Brigit with eyes blazing through her tears; "and is able to instruct a body . . . Och, if only Miss Ruth was back . . .!"

For none of them had seen their kind young lady yet since her return. In vain did Granny and Tim try to console Bride. Too well they knew what this disappointment meant! And as for resisting, why, they were all too ignorant as well as timid to dream of remonstrating. All, except Mrs. Doran herself; and her furious language and disreputable, sodden aspect only confirmed the fiat that had gone forth. Brigit would be better away from such a woman, if only during school hours.

"An' I after spending me good money, dressing her up like a lady; and might as well have pegged the whole of it into the Liffey! I wisht to God people

could I've people to mind their own business . . . And how well that grand young lady of yours wouldn't rise a finger now to spake a word for us, and we being ruinated . . . !”

Brigit was too downcast to attempt any defence of her friend, or even to go to the big house in the Square to find out if she were home yet. She just gave in ; and thus it came to pass that instead of dancing in and out of the Cor'l Cave and you all dressed out, Brigit began, sorely against her will, to attend school regularly.

But she was sustained by a sense of the heroic. She had been badly treated. Indignation gives strength. And she saw the justice of Granny's comments, judiciously kept back till the first hot wave of disappointment had ebbed away.

“ And of coorse you should be scholared ; what use is a body that has no book-l'arning ! ”

But she felt that Dinny was more to be pitied, being in every way the weaker vessel.

“ God help that child,” she said to herself, the first morning that Bride went to school ; “ it's the woe day to him, to be left without that little girleen that was always so careful a hand over him ! If I could get to bring him wid me . . . ! ”

She was pantingly emerging from her cellar for her day's peddling, a corner of the doubtful shawl drawn over her basket of wares, to keep them “ clane.” But no Dinny appeared.

In fact, he had gone forth already and for the first time quite alone. In speechless agony had he watched Bride's hasty preparations for school, and her departure therefor, too much excited to notice his agitation.

Maybe she felt that to have said anything kind would only have opened the flood-gates of feeling for them both. But this apparent neglect, and by Brigeen, was the last drop in Dinny's cup of misery. It overflowed ; he lifted up his voice and wept.

"What's this for!" said his step-mother, in not unnatural indignation at his insistent wailing ; "be off wid yerself from under me feet! What are you afear'd of? Naught never happens naught! Quit off now and have done wid yer whingeing!"

Utterly forlorn, Dinny crept forth and sat upon the doorstep to have it out with himself. There was no one to pity him ; perhaps just as well. Dinny was in trouble, and without that small and trusty hand in his ; he must help himself now.

Nothing better suggested itself to his slowly-moving brain than, when the tears had ceased, to wander forth into the street and let himself drift, till it would be time to go to wait outside the school. Then Brigeen would come out, and they could hear one another's adventures

Behold! at the street-corner, his heart lightened. There was Tim, selling papers with all the aplomb and swagger of successful commerce. Dinny sidled up to him, feeling almost cheerful again.

"You're wid yerself (alone) this morning, aren't ye? Brigeen's off l'arning her Readamadeasy, isn't she? Then you'd as good come wid me to the corner of the Square. There does be good call there for the papers of a morning ; and can't I be larning' ye yer business? for you'll have to be at something of the kind to get the few coppers for the night. The po-lis is getting quare and pertickler those times! As

likely as not you'd get ' pull't ' if they seen you asking a little assistance, unless you had a few papers. You may's well be seeing how the thing is done."

Thus did Dinny pass under a new wing. He followed Tim to the position that astute person had indicated. A wide and windy way it was, a corner, where four broad streets met ; where the pavement was very wide, exposed to all the sun and wind and weather that shone or blew or befell the city. But it was excellently adapted for Tim's trade. Many trams stopped there ; many people passed ; many were wanting papers and not so careful always as they should have been about odd halfpence change.

Dinny took the papers Tim handed to him, but with many qualms. He began offering them to first one, then another possible customer ; but always some other boy nipped in just ahead. He was timid as well as slow ; silent and shrinking he seemed mainly anxious to keep out of everyone's way. And that Everyone was jostling the child about. He was bewildered ; downcast too, for he was having no success. His face grew whiter than before. Puzzled and breathless, he found himself shoved back against some area railings when to his relief, Tim came darting back, and thus addressed his under-study : " Here ! is it that you have all them papers yet ! What at all good's in ye, Dinny Doran ! Gimme a houl't of them, and I'll l'arn ye the right way to be getting on . . . "

And he whisked the papers from Dinny's feeble grasp, and proceeded to give a practical demonstration of his methods. Transfixed with wonder, Dinny beheld his leader shoot boldly forth from the safe pavement, into the vortex of the passing traffic ; saw

him spring, barefoot and agile, on to the step of a passing tram, there to hang and enjoy, with careless ease, the fearful pleasure of a stolen jaunt; till the harassed conductor decending hastily from a fare-collecting foray aloft, preceived the young hero and sternly bad him "be off wid yerself ower this!" And Tim dropping lightly to earth again, rushed back to the admiring Dinny with, "See that, now, how well I got the betther of the whole of the boys! has all the papers sould; and Paddy Nouns and Larry Dempsey there doin' nothing, only standing wid theri mouths open like Howth cod; sure the likes of them is fit for nothing only watching a hen to go lay! Troth, I'd sell as much as the two of them put together and be makin' me sowl . . . ora, see here, Dinny! I bid ye look who's coming! Here!" snatching a couple of papers with a hurried explanation, from the despised Paddy, "let you go see to sell a paper to Miss Ruth!"

The agitated Dinny was hustled almost out of his small senses by being thus initiated into Tim's strenuous methods. But Miss Ruth recognised him, and stopped.

"Well, Dinny, how are you? You're grown quite big since I saw you last!" (a statement more polite than accurate). And so you're a newsboy now, earning for yourself! And how is Brigit getting on at school?"

"Well, Miss," gasped Dinny; while to himself he said, "but doesn't it bate the world, how she knows Brigeen's going!" Miss Ruth gave a hurried look around; then she took a sixpence from her purse and handed it to Dinny in a shamefaced way.

"Mind, now!" she said, sternly, "that's only a

handsel, to bring you luck, as it's your first day to be selling ; you're not to expect it again . . ."

And off she went, with a gay kind little smile ; and then she began to think, " Maybe I shouldn't have . . . ! If Jack had happened along . . . ! Oughtn't Dinny to be at school too ? I hope that wretched sixpence won't do him much harm ! "

And as she passed out of sight, " What'll we do wid it ? " Dinny asked of Tim, honourably displaying the coin.

" What at all, only keep it till night. You'd as good be selling again to-night, and it does be middlin' could . . . And Brigeen's as apt as not to be out cadging "

" You keep it ! " begged Dinny, anxious to be rid of so great a responsibility. Tim took the money, spat upon it for luck, and pocketed it with an indifferent ease that would have been trying, but for the confidence with which he always inspired Dinny.

And he was right. The night did turn cold and wet ; and Brigeen did meet them abroad in the streets, to relate her educational experiences and help in selling the papers. And as none of the children felt drawn to going home, their respective guardians being in a state that promised little peace, they were enabled by Miss Ruth's dole to refresh and comfort themselves, at a fried potato cart that ministers to such needs as theirs near O'Connell Bridge. Miss Ruth need not have regretted her almsgiving for once.

And yet, if Jack had caught her red-handed in the act, would he not have been justified in reproving her ? For Dinny naturally regarded her gift as a kind of commercial success. He couldn't but hope it would

be repeated. He haunted that corner where indeed many newsboys congregated ; ragged, thin, barefoot they were, yet merry and on good terms with one another.

" I don't know how it is," Ruth remarked to Jack, " Dinny's so slow ; but no matter how many boys are about, he is always the one to hand me a paper . . ."

" I hope you take change from him ! but don't you know you're ' Dinny's young lady ? ' Honour among thieves ! "

" So that's why ! Poor little chap ! He's not growing"

" How can he, when he's not half fed ! But don't worry, Ruth ! we may be able to do something for him ; that old Molally is a decent soul"

" There ! there's Bride herself selling papers. I must have a word with her . . don't you wait . . ."

Brigit looked up at Miss Ruth with shining eyes. She was trying hard to adapt herself to the downfall of her theatrical hopes ; to the dreary restrictions of school-life. She knew nothing of how these changes had come about. There was therefore no cloud upon the mood to which she felt herself being transported at sight of the kind young lady. If only Miss Ruth knew the way she was after being knocked about, she'd maybe see to get her righted ! Why she might even get her back to the pantomime !

These hopes were quickly dispelled.

" Well, Brigit ! " said Miss Ruth, and paused.

" You're welcome home, Miss ! " ventured Brigit.

" Thank you ; I've not been round to see any of you yet . . . going to school, aren't you, every day, I hope ? "

"Yis, Miss," thus Brigit, with more amiability than truth; but why should she not say what the young lady wanted to hear! And how did Miss Ruth know about the school? And she gazed eagerly at Miss Brabazon in her rich furs, and longed to tell her everything; but

"I'm sorry to see you here!" said Miss Ruth; "sorry and disappointed! You ought to be working at your books now, not out here . . ."

Ah! this was no time to talk about the theatre!

"Sure, no more I won't, when you bid me not, Miss."

"That's a good girl!" said the innocent Ruth; and went away, full of plans for doing Brigit good; according to her, the young lady's own notions.

"Isn't it sweet of her," she thought, "to give in at once!" And indeed, Brigit did begin then, in deference to Miss Ruth's wishes, to "look for a few coppers," in another locality. It would have been better, every way, for her to have kept with Tim and Dinny and joined in the paper-selling; but Miss Ruth must be humoured.

Such errors of judgment as this of Miss Ruth's are common enough among the Tritons of that human ocean, in whose depths minnows such as Tim and the young Dorans have to struggle so desperately if they are to live at all. As a rule, the small fry accept as inevitable the mistakes of their benefactors; they just are, like wet days and hunger and drink. Even the broad-minded charity of Mrs. Molally could not explain satisfactorily why Dr. Jack should be having himself annoyed, coming round so constant, and not alone collecting the rents but fighting the people

about opening their windows and doing a bit of white-washing. It is thus that the efforts of Guilds and Lend-a-Hand Clubs sometimes present themselves, to those whom they are meant to benefit.

"Herself says," remarked Brigit one evening that she and Dinny were snatching a surreptitious joy in Granny's cellar, Mrs. Doran being too drunk to interfere, "Herself says it's what Miss Ruth would be better employed at home, where she might be drinkin' tea and playing her pianna and taking a shinheat at the fire, instid of interfering where she's not wanted."

"Sure she means it all well, the crathur!" said the pacific Granny; "what does she know? You can't expect too much . . . Is it in your bare feet y'are again, Dinny? I thought Miss Ruth or some of the ladies gev you a fine little pair of boots!"

"Sure, there's where it is!" said Brigit, as Dinny remained uncomfortably silent; "some society the ladies has for not letting you be in yer bare feet. And Miss Ruth told Tim and Dinny where to go; and sure enough they got boots, ay and stockings, too; and you get a badge there, only Dinny's too small still . . . but without that badge the society says no one should buy a paper off of ye."

"Quare notions some people does have!" commented Granny.

"Ay," Brigit went on; "and only last night, when me and Dinny asked a little assistance from a big fat kind of a lady, says she, 'Where's yer badge; I'll give you nothing when you haven't one!' so that it appears as if the badge would help you to cadge; give you l'ave, lek."

"Not at all!" said Tim; "them badges is to help you to sell"

"See that, now! how well Tim Carty has the whole thing off! It's in Parliament, or the Castle you should be making laws."

"Whisht, now, and let me hear it all," said Granny; "only a bare sketch I got of the thing . . ."

"They got the boots right enough," said Brigit, "and quare and awkward Dinny felt in his; but I tould him he'd get bruk in to the feel of them by degrees. And Miss Ruth come along and was that plased, she bought every paper he had"

"The Lord reward her! she that always has the good thought!"

"I'm not saying but she has, still, that only left him his bare tuppence on the dozen . . . instid of his chances . . . And you'd think it was a-purpose betimes, the way the people will pass on, and never reach the hand to ye! So we were short of what Herself expected, and she was tearin' mad, and when she seen the boots---'Cock you up, indeed!' she says; 'boots, no less! But I've better use for them, nor you have!' So she whips them off in her apron and she cursing out of her, till you'd think she'd set the place a-fire; and off wid her to pop the boots. But," and Brigit laughed out at this part of her story, "she came back, double quick time, and she fit to be tied! The society has the boots stamped, and the pawn-brokers all warned not to take them. Troth, I wisht to goodness they never marked them! for of all the Hell's delight, and she kicked it up then; thrun the boots behind the fire . . . I had to shove Dinny in an-undher the table, the way he wouldn't get kilt all out!"

"God help us all! Mad she must be!" sighed Granny.

"Mad! Och, how mad she is!" quoth Bride; "and she wid tin curlers in her front hair, no less! And what's more, she's right enough about Dinny and the boots! He'll never be gev as much wid them on as when he's rale shivery . . . But it's a hard case to think that; and the Society ladies 'ull do nothing for him unless he wears their boots . . ."

"Well, there's the way you'll be having things!" said Granny.

CHAPTER V

CHRISTMAS COMES OVER THE OLD DOORSTEP

CHRISTMAS was drawing near with its accustomed bustle and air of gaiety, and the readier money-spending which is one of the season's compensations for the very poor. People that possess cash, part it more readily then than at other times.

In consequence Bride and Dinny were having less difficulty than usual in making up their nightly toll. And with the philosophical unconcern of their class, already alluded to, they were deriving much pleasure from the shop-windows, brilliantly lit up and full of colour. As they couldn't buy the things, they were spared what George Eliot calls the "labour of choice," with the subsequent heart-burnings most of us know.

It chanced one evening that Ruth and Jack met, a pretty frequent happening, at a favourite tea-shop, and were going forth again, warmed and refreshed, when some incoming customers obliged them to stand aside from the ordinary passage. Ruth thus had an opportunity of observing a curious scene.

In a very wide window, a cook was standing dressed in white, baking and buttering luscious hot cakes for tea-drinkers inside.

And pressed against the glass outside were small faces, eager, pale . . .

"Just look!" said Ruth.

"Yes, clever ad., isn't it?"

"I call it an outrage! Making such cakes in the very eyes of those children. O, I'm glad I didn't know what was going on while I was inside there, eating away . . . Look at them! the poor, thin, little creatures! Clustered there, in the cold, looking at what they can't get . . ."

"Fifty at least to-night. I never saw so many before."

"How white their faces are!"

"Electric light," said Jack; "you're a bit off colour yourself in it."

"Jack, you're horrid. It's hunger, not electric light! I wish . . . O if only I . . ."

"I know, you'd like to treat them all! But if you started with these, you'd have every ragamuffin in Dublin here before you could say knife! You're doing enough; the Christmas Tree at the Hospital and . . . and all the other things . . ."

"They cost me nothing! Father lets me give what I please. . . . Ah! there are Brigit and Dinny . . . laughing away . . ."

"Not a frown among the lot," said Jack, "so console yourself with that and come along . . ."

Ruth had a guilty longing to slip some money into Brigit's hand as she passed, but . . . Jack! She was close enough to the children as she made her way through them to catch a remark from Brigit that was greeted with a shout of laughter.

"Buttering them nose-high, so she is. Them cakes is slip-go-down and no mistake!"

"Those young Dorans ought not to be there, of course," said Ruth, "still they were enjoying it all . . ."

"Christmas times!" said Jack, feeling in his pocket after a small, a very small article reposing there, destined for the adornment of Miss Brabazon's soft throat. It wasn't half good enough of course, still He knew she'd say, "you know Jack you really mustn't! Why, how often am I to tell you we're not even engaged!" And he could counter this with, "Well . . . but, Christmas times you know . . .!"

He was planning walking home with her, and slipping it into her hand as they said good-night at the door . . . when . . . when with the kind of importance that always surrounded the great Dr. Brabazon, his motor drew up beside them, and Ruth's father leant out, to say, "What are you doing here at this hour?"

"Why, Father! it isn't really late . . . only . . ."

"Get in here at once, it's raining like . . . like . . . You shouldn't be out in such weather . . ."

And thus was Ruth whirled off, without time for more than a hurried nod to Jack; and no sign at all from her father.

Jack's heart was hot. The worst of the thing was, the old man, as he called Dr. Brabazon, was right, according to his lights. Jack felt that in a blundering sort of way; and therefore it followed that he was wrong.

"He thinks I've no business to be . . . even to be going about with her . . . Hang his big house and his big practice, and his big purse . . . I could wish him as poor as Job . . . Only, what would Ruth do then . . . And the Christmas dinner in the Square . . . oh, confound it all, even if he . . . or Ruth

herself most likely . . . include me, how could I go ! The other chaps may go as usual. It was ripping last year. . . ."

He felt again after his little gift. Of course, if he was a real hero, he'd have done something heroic with it ; have sent it boldly, or maybe have flung it in the gutter. Jack simply bided his time, and recalled a letter that lay in the same pocket. It was from what he called " home."

" Grandfather means all right. I wish I wanted to spend Christmas with him as he says he'd like me to . . . Pretty dismal ! But I'd better go. After all, there's only the two of us. And I suppose he's done the best he could for me . . . Anyway it's rotten here now . . . it can scarcely be much worse at home ! "

So Jack went off to the old place in Galway, where there wasn't one to welcome him but the querulous old man and the servants. Jack was an only child and an orphan. And it was all as he had known it would be ; dreary and comfortless and depressing. Jack sedulously shot rabbits all day, and at night after dinner would listen to stories about the delinquencies of tenants and the iniquitous proceedings of Land Courts. And they always ended up with, " You know, Jack, there's nothing here now for you to count on ; after paying for your profession and all that . . . and the mortgages on the place . . . and the expenses And not a penny to be made by farming now-a-days" and so on and so on.

" I understand, sir," Jack would say, " and I hope you'll never regret all you've done for me, giving me the very chance I wanted"

CHRISTMAS COMES OVER THE OLD DOORSTEP

"Make the most of it, boy, for it's all I can do for you . . ."

Christmas times! Yes! and thanks partly to Miss Ruth, partly to the native gaiety that survived in Granny, that season brought unwonted cheerfulness to the cellar. Its grimy walls had been newly white-washed; and that was thanks to Jack and the Guild. It was freshly decorated with holly and ivy; and that was thanks to some small services rendered by Brigit to Mrs. Byrne at the corner, in acknowledgement of which that lady had bestowed upon the little girl various scraps of greenery which were over from the adornment of the shop. They made a brave show, disposed about the cellar by the children under Granny's directions.

"And now," the old woman said, looking round approvingly, "when we have the Crib dressed out and the candle lit, we needn't call the King our cousin! Four pence that candle cost, and a brave big one it is too. But a body wouldn't be without it if they could at all . . . Dinny that will be to light it soon now. And in the County Clare we'd always leave the door open, the way any poor Mother that might happen by and a child in her arms would know where to turn in and find a welcome for the two of them. But sure, even if we had a window that would show the light through, there's no one here understands the thing. Or would be inclined to come down all the long ways to this . . ."

"And maybe slip if they didn't know the broken step was there," said Dinny, carried out of his usual shyness by the excitement that was in the air, "and then the mother might let the child fall out of her arms."

"Sooner nor have that happen," said Granny fervently, "we'd show no candle at all! But see now, Dinny, isn't the Crib grand! There's the Holy Mother . . . and the Baby . . . and the ox and the ass and Saint Joseph and the shepherds and all . . . Wait now till I'll have it all done out . . ."

"It's r'ally like a house that would be coaxing you inside, with a good fire and light shining out from the door," said Brigit, as the well-skilled Granny set a short candle-end behind the Crib. It was to be sure a cheap and tawdry thing. But to the children it represented quite a high level of Art. Probably like some critics, they read into it just what they put there themselves.

And thus did Christmas come to Granny and the children in the cellar. It manifested itself further. There came a heavy tread down, down the stairs. Something was set down at the door and then there was a knock. Dinny gasped. Could it be some of the shepherds. . . . ?

Tim opened the door.

"Does Mrs. Molally live here?" was asked.

"She does, sir," Tim answered, in awed politeness.

"Then Miss Brabazon's after sending yous this, and wishes yous all a merry Christmas!"

Therewith in the clap of your hand a goodly hamper was landed in, and the messenger had vanished before you could look about you.

"The Lord save us! Sure it must be some mistake!" from Granny.

She was standing, and Dinny holding by her apron staring half-frightened at this strange happening. But Tim and Brigit, full of young faith in life and its

golden possibilities, were dragging the mysterious basket forward into the circle of modified gloom afforded by the tall Christmas candle.

"The sorra mistake!" shouted Tim in an ecstasy; "no, but here's your name as large as life, 'Mrs. Molally and the three children . . . !' That's us . . ."

He stopped and looked to Granny for instructions.

Brigit pushed him aside.

"Here, I've the way, will ye! What work is that to be getting on wid, instid of opening the thing and finding out what's inside!"

And therewith she seized Granny's old, well-worn knife, and in a trice the string securing the hamper was cut in twenty places . . . your Dorans and Cartys not being given to such trivial economies as the undoing of knots! The lid was thrown back, and the amazing contents displayed.

"Did ever anyone see the beat of that!" exclaimed Granny, as one parcel after another was taken out, torn open and handed over to its owner. Miss Ruth had written upon each gift the name of whom it was meant to please.

"She's forgot no one!" declared Tim, assuming with jaunty air the cap, muffler and warm gloves that bore his name. "Ow . . . ow . . . ow . . . cowld, how-are-ye!" hugging himself in delight, and folding the comforter across and across to show how wide and all-sufficing it was.

"An' the lovely colour it is! A sort of puce," said the sympathetic Granny.

Even as Tim was fingering it and admiring it, a curious look came into his eyes; a strange, exalted air of pity. He took off the muffler, rolled it again

in its paper and laid it aside, unnoticed by the others, who were examining their own gifts.

"The grand little coat for Dinny! And the red plaid shawleen for meself . . ."

"But I have the whole of yiz bet out of a face!" cried Brigit; "will yiz just look at the hat! And the frock, and aprons; and you'd not guess what they're for, if you were to try from this to Hollintide . . ."

"Och what time have we for Riddle-me riddle-me-rees!" scoffed Tim, "and the half of the things not looked at yet . . ."

"Ah, let Brigeen try on the grand clothes!" said Granny, "ay, you become a bit of decency well, the same as your mother before you, God rest her soul! And to say all them things we're after getting are new! not one ever wore them before us!"

"New from the shop, and no mistake about it!" pronounced Miss Julia who had appeared in the cellar a few moments before.

"Here's a cake!" said Tim, "and a joint of mait of some kind . . ."

"It's an ould saying and a thrue one," said Granny, "'Glory be to Christmas, the day we get the beef!' and indeed that's as fine a cut as ever looked at you from off of a butcher's stall! Dear! but that's good, and we that'll have the fine dinner to-morrow . . ."

And here Granny's voice of high delight trailed down to a minor-sounding note. Brigit observed this.

"What's a trouble to ye, Granny?" she asked.

"Och, nothing, alanna, only that j'int should be roasted if it had its due; and how is that to be managed? The last little place I had was twict as good in that way, only for them houses being con-

demned the way they were. For I dhruv a spike in there, above the hearth that you might hang a leg of mutton out of, ay or a leg of beef, either, supposin' that ever you had the like. But this wall's that solid you might as well be striving to knock a nail into the Rock of Cashel . . ."

"And is it that we won't be having it at all, Granny?" asked the timid Dinny, with tears in his voice.

"Ah, to be sure an' we can, acushla! Don't be down in yerself at all—can't we be frying it on the pan . . . And maybe Miss Julia would come down . . . just for once in a way . . . and take share . . . for company, lek?"

"To be sure an' I will, and feels obliged to you, Mrs. Molally for the kind thought . . . Christmas is a day you'll be apt to be feeling a trifle lonesome in yerself . . ."

Miss Julia sighed; then looked ashamed and said to Tim, "Show me them things of yours again, Tim; I didn't get more than a half a look at them . . ."

The same far-away look transfigured Tim's weather-beaten little face as he obediently displayed his gifts to Miss Julia. She passed them in friendly review, with a "There's some comfort in things like them, of a cold night!" and as she handed them back to Tim, and watched him rolling them carefully together, she said: "Aren't you going to wear them to-night? It's like frost."

"How much have we gothered in th'ould mug up above, miss?" said Tim, half under his breath, with apparent irrelevance.

"If we all can give the same as last week, we'll have enough by Saturday," said Miss Julia.

"Five nights more! Isn't it well Miss Ruth sent these?" said Tim. "I'll keep the cap, she mightn't consither it suitable but if I can find her . . . its mostly beyant in The Green she does be these evenings, and has to keep l'anin' against the wall while she'll be singing, she's got that wakely in herself but if she has the muffler and the gloves itself antel we get the cloak for her again" and Tim disappeared.

"Where at all is he gone, and without getting bit, bite or sup here!" said Granny.

"Where is Tim Carty gone, is it? Well, it's meself can tell ye that! Gone to look for Katty the Wran, that's out this perishin' night, and she without the little cloak that was keeping the life in her! Some kind lady gave it to her, that had heard her singing. What became of it, is it? Had to pop it, for the rent, and if she didn't, herself and the poor mother and the old grandfather would all be thrown out upon the street . . . the Lord forgive them that does the like and has no leniency or softness for the poor, only harishing them out of their little places . . ."

Miss Julia's faded eyes blazed, and her thin cheeks flushed with a not unholy rage.

"But," said Granny, in her deep soft voice, "take care but whoever done that, and threatened them that-a-way wasn't doin' it for himself at all! I've heard that there's as many as five, ay and six, or maybe more that's all consarned in them rents, and all has to get their share . . . ay, and moreover that it ud surprise you to hear the grand high-up people that ull take the money the poor pay . . . but sure, God help them and the whole of us! maybe the weight of them

doesn't know where it's coming from or how hard the people does be gettin' it, to pay them at all . . ."

"If they don't know, they should be made to know," said Miss Julia, fiercely; and then with a softened kind of sob in her voice she went on, "and what do you think, but my boys above that do be coming to night-school, they're saving up, to get the Wran's little cloak out of pawn for her! Ay now, what do ye think of that? Halfpence and pence they'll bring me, to drop into the old mug; his lodging-money, Paddy Nouns brought me, ere last night . . ."

"God bless them for it; and won't it all be before them!" said Granny; while Miss Julia wiped her eyes with a clean ragged pocket handkerchief, and went away with "I'll be wishing yous all good evening and a happy Christmas and many of them!"

"And we wish you the same!" was chorussed after her; and then Miss Ruth's gifts were put away, till to-morrow, and they sat down to supper.

"Herself that's on a great blind, those times!" Bride remarked conversationally, while Granny was sweetening the tea with agreeable, if thriftless, generosity, and pouring a Benjamin's portion of milk into the jampot from which Dinny was to drink his; "and on the top of all, she's that behind wid the rent that I b'lieve it's what we'll have to quit out. I hear Miss Ruth was at Doctor Jack to not mind, but says he, 'She'll be no better able to pay a pound next week, nor she is to pay the sixteen shilluns now. It's no kindness to people to be letting them go an getting deeper into debt!'"

"God help her, whatever!" said Granny; "if she'd get a little while, itself, till she'd see to turn

herself about ! If she was to come down here . . .” Granny glanced inquiringly at Bride. Dinny looked unhappy, and Brigit said, “ Sure, that ud never answer—fighting rings round her she’d be, in no time !”

“ Well, well, God’s good !” said Mrs. Molally, with a sigh, maybe of relief that she wasn’t being encouraged in that scheme of giving shelter to Mrs. Doran . . . “ and now, Brigeen, what’s this grand secret of yours ? Faith there’s so much going on to-night, and it Chrissemas Eve and all, that I don’t know am I standing on me head or me heels !”

“ Standin’ on yer head, Granny !” said Dinny with his slow little laugh ; but before he could end his comment, Brigit broke in with “ What do you say to Miss Ruth getting me a place at Byrne’s shop beyant at the corner ! To go in and give a hand with things for an hour or two of a day after school ! And there’s why she sent me them grand clothes ; says it’s no fit thing for I to go throllopin’ about the streets late at night ; that it’s bad enough for boys, but it doesn’t answer at all for the lek of me . . . And wouldn’t it be a sin and a shame to be slavin’ that frock out under the weather ! Let alone the hat !” said Brigit, looking admiringly at the latter article and proceeding to put it on again ; “ to be sure she’s right, and I should keep to some dacint way of goan an, and I wid clothes like them upon me !”

Workers in foreign missions are wont to say, that clothing for savages is the first step towards civilisation. If this be true on Afric’s golden sands, much more must it be for the Brigits, under their uncertain skies.

“ God knows you should !” said Granny, fervently ;

" what else has me the way I am, only the loss of me good clothes ! Had to go to hospital, and when I retrieved out of the heavy bout of sickness that it was hadn't I to sell every little dud I had, to keep meself while I was trying to get another place . . . cook I was, in them days. But no lady would look at me, on account of me appearance being gone down . . . though they might ! Many's the good dinner them ould paws of mine sent up . . . !"

And as if in corroboration of her words, she held out for inspection by the children her wrinkled hands, disfigured by work and long neglect.

Dinny loved those old hands, and he now drew one of them down to rub it against his cheek as he stood nestling beside Granny. But the children had heard this tale of their old friend's downfall too often before to feel greatly excited over it now. They knew, almost as well as herself, how good This body and That other had been to her ; enabling her to stock her modest basket, and to pay her licence to hawk ; and that many's and many's the time she had gone out hungry of a morning and had come back at night with full and plentins. So why should she ever let her heart down ! Hard times she had known, to be sure, since ever she had buried Himself, there at home in the County Clare, and it was owin' to that she had had to go to sarvice again. And often it was wondering she'd be, would she ever get back to look, could she find where he was laid in the old church-yard, him and their one little child that had lived only long enough to steal away their hearts . . . close a-by the wall they were buried . . . She thought some day she'd like to mosey back there, so that some

neighbour would see to have her laid beside them . . if any of the old friends were left . . .

The children listened to this familiar recital ; then having talked things pretty well out, they said their prayers and settled themselves for the night in the big bed.

Christmas Day came, and there was early Mass in the big chapel close by ; with the loveliest of music and the Holy Child in the Crib. And then Granny prepared the feast. That large-hearted hostess had bidden not only Tim and Miss Julia, but Mrs. Doran also, " for fraid she'd be feeling lonesome." But to the relief of all, this invitation was declined ; the lady declaring that she had friends of her own that would be " long sorry to see her beholden to any of yer charity meat ! "

" Well, let her plase herself ! " said the tranquil Granny. Her right hand had not forgotten its cunning. For once, the cellar abounded with toothsome fare. Miss Julia partook of it with an extreme gentility that was heightened by the tightness of her black alpaca dress. Tim made a magnificent contribution to the feast of various kinds of nuts, obtained at a marvellous reduction through his, Tim's foresight and skill. Paradoxical as it may appear, the low price of these dainties added much to their value in the eyes of the cellar-party, radiant with unwonted good cheer.

" 'Tis yerself is the lad, Timmeen ! " declared Mrs. Molally. Tim tried to look unconscious, and cracked another filbert for Miss Julia with his teeth.

Soon after the New Year, Brigit's predictions were verified. Mrs. Doran did get " booted out " of the Guild Tenement House.

"I'm so sorry for those children!" said Ruth to Jack, who was back in town again from Galway; "and they're such nice pretty little things . . .!"

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Jack; "they're just as hungry, the kind with mouths from ear to ear like young swallows. But naturally you feel more for a butterfly than for a beetle. . . That woman! She's a holy terror and no mistake! We couldn't let her stop on in one of our Guild houses!"

"Won't she be as bad anywhere else!"

"Well, we made the rules and we mustn't break them, eh?"

"But the children! I kept track of them where they were . . ."

(So she imagined, Miss Brabazon).

She went on, "If I could get Dinny to school . . . I have Brigit working in that shop . . ."

"Good business!" said Jack.

"Yes, it's better than what she was at. But it's pretty hopeless, that awful drink . . ."

"It goes with poverty—cause or effect—it's hard sometimes to say which. Then consumption . . . That Doran woman looks very like it. . ."

"And the two poor children living with her! Can nothing be done!"

"It's the kind of thing that is always going on," said Jack; "no earthly good worrying."

"Maybe not; but ever since that day I tried to get them dinner, after the Zoo . . . you remember . . .?"

"Rather! I felt a worm . . . ready to sing 'Turn thy hasty foot aside . . .'"

"Jack! I'm in earnest! It began that day . . ."

She was thinking of her relations with the children.

"If only I'd known . . !" said Jack.

He was thinking of himself and Ruth and their relations with one another.

"Silly old thing! I mean, I felt somehow as if I had assumed some responsibility, having found out things about them. . . ."

"You've found out things about me too! What price responsibility for me! I wanted looking after then, the same as they did. And I do still." And he added, tentatively, "You're bound to have it to do some day!"

He looked doubtfully at Ruth. Jack's eyes could say a great deal; you see such eyes in Galway, deep, mysterious, always changing, like the sea itself.

Ruth laughed and said, "I won't meet trouble half-way!"

Not so many days later, Ruth met Dinny, barefoot again. He looked miserable enough, hugging a bundle of papers under his arm.

Ruth stopped him.

"Where are your boots, Dinny?" she asked with what he described later to Tim as "vengeance in her eye." He said nothing, but twisted one chilly foot round the other ankle, helpless before the young lady.

Tim Carty would have been at no such loss. With the dexterity of long practice in supplying the necessary garments for naked truth, he would at once have made some good excuse. He was not more deceitful than Dinny; just he was more apt with the ready lie, that very present help in time of trial for the timid.

But Dinny could only take refuge in silence. He thought it would maybe only l'ave Miss Ruth worse

to hear the boots was after being burnt. And maybe she'd get to see Herself and take to go fight her about them . . . and if she got to know that Dinny had told "on" her . . .

These imaginings were so terrible that Dinny couldn't even look up. If he had, and that Miss Ruth had seen the tears that hung on those long eyelashes, ready to fall, how could she have blamed him ! But he didn't. She felt a bit impatient at his silence. And how gladly would Dinny have explained, and thus evaded the misery of unjust blame !

After a pause, " I'm sorry, Dinny ; and disappointed too. I thought the boots would have been so nice for you. And anyway you might have worn them, to please me ! I think you must be ashamed of yourself . . . ! "

Away swept Ruth ; but before she had taken many steps, her heart softened and she was turning back to make friends with the perplexed little boy, when Jack appeared.

She told him what had happened.

" What in the name of goodness did you expect ! You can't help these people . . . it's no good trying . . . at least . . . "

" But I can't let it go at that. I must do something. I'll just ask that woman. . . I've found out that she's gone to New Street. I'll astonish her a bit when I see her . . . "

" You can't go there, Ruth ! "

" Why not ? It's quite handy to the Square. "

" Well, you're not going there, if it was twice as handy. . . Promise me that, Ruth . . . I have—I have reasons. You mustn't dream of it. . . "

"Very well," said Ruth, secretly enjoying doing what Jack told her. "I won't go there. But what's to become of the children?"

"Oh, something's bound to turn up. That old Molally body is a decent old skin. She'll find some way of looking after the kiddies, you may depend."

Jack was right in both surmises. Granny contrived to keep an eye on the children; and something did turn up; more accurately speaking, was turned up, by the indefatigable Miss Ruth. She had Dinny also looked after, in that matter of school attendance.

"And now," she thought, "I hope that I'll see no more of that wretched street-begging . . ."

Well, she didn't; for some weeks. Not that it had ceased; simply that the children out of consideration for her feelings avoided her customary "beats." It isn't at all difficult for such wary young birds to evade the vigilance of their betters. Indeed, they were only found out to be at their old game by a regrettable mishap.

Miss Brabazon had been out late; had got caught in a heavy downpour of rain; had therefore purveyed herself in haste a waterproof quite unlike any garment she had ever been seen in till then. And it was dark, and blowing hard, and she being further disguised by her rushing speed, and an umbrella held well down over her face, no wonder that poor Brigit was misled into the *bêtise* of begging from her benefactress. As thus:

"Luffely lady! Will you throw us a copper in the love o' God!" Ruth deigned no reply. The bare feet patter after her, insistent as the hound of heaven.

"Ah, luffely lady. 'Tis you have the luffely face

upon you ! Won't ye bestow wan ha'penny upon me, to get a bite of food for the child here, and we'll be saying a prayer for ye . . . will ye, me lady . . just wan copper . . . dhreeped to the skin we are . . ."

And as Ruth, inexorably obedient to the teaching of Jack, forged pitilessly ahead through the driving rain, she heard from the suppliant : " Well, g'lang ou'er that, ye dirty long stree! of a lamp-post, yeh ! "

Ruth was divinely tall ; hence the sally of wit. Hearing this she adroitly shifted the umbrella and turned round, just in time to recognise Bride and Dinny as they disappeared without having seen the object of that parting jibe face to face. In fact at the moment another possible almsgiver had arisen upon their horizon and they had at once sheered off in pursuit thereof.

" The young Turk ! " said Jack, with indignation ; " lamp-post indeed ! You may as well give that imp up as a bad job."

" It wasn't meant for me, that cheek," said Ruth ; " it was beautifully impersonal. . . You'd have laughed yourself if you'd heard the sudden change of tone. . . But that hateful begging ! If only that could be stopped ! "

" The ' lek ' of them must live somehow," said Jack, " in spite of the old Mossoo who didn't see the necessity. . . ."

They were passing that corner-shop of which mention has so often been made. And then and there Ruth had her inspiration.

" If I could only get Dinny the job of taking round the papers of a morning ! " she said ; " I'm sure the Byrnes would give it to anyone I recommended. . .

DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

Father gets all the illustrated weeklies there for the waiting-room, and . . ."

"Who does it for them now?"

"How do I know! But whoever it is can't want a job as badly as poor Dinny! He's so small and . . . and hopeless . . . it's not much he's fit for. But this he could do before school of a morning."

"Would he be able?"

Jack had the professional outlook.

"Able! To carry a few papers along a street or so! Would it be as hard work, or as bad for the child as cadging about the streets, at night?"

"Yes, but . . ." Jack had the feeling that Dinny bore no active part in these nightly efforts; he just was there, to be exploited by his step-mother; to be protected as well as possible by Bride and Tim. This was a very different matter from acting as messenger for the Byrnes.

But before he could lay these doubts before Ruth, she had gone on to say, "We might try it, anyway;" so eagerly that Jack said no more. He thought it would be useless. Ruth had as usual fallen violently in love with a plan that was new. She felt that she had laid it all before Jack; she was in the habit of asking his advice. Seldom indeed was she influenced thereby, but the superiority this implied kept things on an agreeable footing.

She put the thing through at once. As she had expected, the Byrnes were amenable. Some one else was shoved aside, to make way for the *protégé* of Miss Brabazon, the vehement young lady whose father beyant in the Square was their biggest customer; why wouldn't they, indeed! and welcome, Miss!

" Won't it be grand, Dinny," thus the young lady to that reluctant little recruit about to be enrolled among the world's army of workers ; " fancy, earning money for yourself, like Brigit ! And . . . and . . . and it won't interfere with your school-hours at all ! Neither of you need miss your lessons . . . "

" No Miss," said the meek Dinny.

(But . . . earning for *themselves* ; Even still, the kind, the exalted and beautiful Miss Ruth couldn't be med to understand the differ ! As for school . . . God help her ! Much she knew about that !)

" And never as much as once said, to not be out late ! " ejaculated Brigeen, as Miss Ruth went off, with her pleasant smiling nod of farewell.

" Maybe it's what she forgot," said Dinny.

" Forgot ! Troth, it's little passes her ! But a body'd as soon not have to be tellin' her lies, if you could help it at all ! "

Thus Bride, in blissful ignorance that she had been found out. For Ruth never alluded to that lamp-post incident. She was growing beyond the folly, or worse, of driving a weaker vessel into a corner, by the question direct ; not *the* corner observe ! a less idiotic but still reprehensible proceeding, often employed to subdue childish assertiveness. Her silence now upon this vexed question of their nightly wanderings was such a relief to the young Dorans, that it's almost a pity that they didn't know that she knew, and so could have given her credit for her reticence.

Bride shared the doubts felt by Doctor Jack about the suitability of the arrangement at Byrne's for Dinny. She had agreed with the politeness of her class to all that Miss Ruth had said ; indeed, what use would any

remonstrances have been, in face of such a suggestion ! such an advance in life for Dinny ! But . . .

For instance, would he ever be able to be in time at Byrne's ?

" Hard-set enough I do be, as it is," she confided to Granny, " to get the two of us readied up for school of a morning. But sure I must only see to do the best I can. Only it's a hard job to get Dinny wakened, these dark mornings "

" Och, little fellahs like that will always sleep till the Lord ud call them, if only they're let," said Granny, from her profound experience ; " and won't it be grand, having him there where you are yerself, company, lek " . . .

" Sure it's in the mornings he'll be there, and I'm not wanting in Byrne's till after school, still . . . Dinny's that quare in himself, and innocent . . . Sure, isn't it time for he to not be houlding me by the hand and we goan along . . . "

So it was, time ! And yet, and yet . . .

Miss Ruth's plan did bring the children together ; but that was by Brigit's doing. She found it necessary to become responsible for Dinny. She not only routed him out of bed of a morning ; she went with him to the scene of his unwilling labours, and did her best to make things smooth for his wavering and timid tread. And maybe Dinny's clinging touch had more power in the scheme of things as they affected these children, than even Miss Ruth's capable hands. It kept the mother alive in Brigit.

It all sounded so wise ; quite feasible. Dinny was just to fill up the time before school, by running round with the papers. The little fellow had listened with

dejected respect, while Miss Ruth had expatiated upon the advantages of the scheme ; but his heart had shrunk with inward fears, of which no one knew ; not even the trusty Brigeen. Dinny was too much ashamed of his terror to let it be known. And he felt instinctively that Brigit would scarcely have understood it.

There was a marked difference between the two children ; greater than is often observable in families. Brigit was stronger, body and mind. Her infancy had not been passed under ideal conditions, yet she had had her mother's hand about her, which Dinny had missed. And, somehow, nothing makes up for this loss, so that even babies too young to be suspected of foolish sentiment in the matter, don't respond to wise and liberal rearing in the ratio one might expect, if that care is administered through those whose own the children are not. Nothing yet discovered can supply that want. Dinny was a specimen, Brigeen, Granny, had done their best for him ; but it wasn't what he should have had. The Dinnys of our cities really deserve a lot of credit for managing to live at all.

Our particular Dinny was a slow child ; slow in mind and body. He was now confronted with a task that required a good deal of speed of limb and thought. He was just beginning to overcome the first dread difficulties of school-life ; the regular hours ; the strict rules, so meaningless to him ; let alone the puzzling horrors of the alphabet and the multiplication tables. And here now was his job at Byrne's !

Bride and Tim did their best to coach him up ; but their own lights were dim.

"If only They hadn't got at Dinny to make him go to school of a morning," said Tim, "he could be going wid meself of an evening to Miss Julia."

"Sure what good's in that!" said the sceptical Brigit; "what is the likes of her able to teach!"

"You whisht!" said Tim, threateningly; "proud you'd be, yerself, to be let in there! but you'll not . . . it's only for boys . . . except the one little girleen"

Tim's face again took on a softer look, which Brigit did not perceive, so she replied, briskly, "I wouldn't go! So there! You and your night-school!"

"Them that's goan to Miss Julia has manners . . ."

Tim's pause on this assertion was significant.

"I'd get it tight to b'lieve that!" said Brigit; and Tim, not being able to produce a suitable counter-thrust, retired, whistling, to express unconcern.

Perhaps it was out of opposition that Tim did contrive, one evening later on in the season, to introduce Dinny to night-school.

"Bride's to stop a bit late at Byrne's to-night," he said, "so you may's well come along up with me to Miss Julia's and see what it's like . . . Granny has to be out too . . ."

So Dinny went; following Tim, who, failing Bride, was wont to assume a kind of deputy-guardianship over the child. Up the long flights of the wide old staircase they went, till they reached the very room in which Dinny himself had been born.

"It's here she does have us now," Tim explained, with some pride; "'her own little place above under the roof got too little, wid all the lads; this itself . . . wait till you'll see how throng it is! the whole of them

CHRISTMAS COMES OVER THE OLD DOORSTEP

wanting to come to Miss Julia. We do help her wid the rent and the turf . . . for the fire . . . anyone that's able, I mean"

He opened the door, through which there came a pleasant buzz of voices, and went in, Dinny behind him.

The big room was changed. It was long since it had looked so cheery ; though, God knows ! it couldn't well have been more bare and shabby. Down the centre, there ran a kind of table, contrived out of planks laid upon old boxes. A slight modification of the same arrangement furnished seats for some thirty scholars, ranging from perhaps ten, to twenty, years of age who were all receiving instruction from Miss Julia. A ragged, starved, white-faced set they were, to be sure. Yet never scholars looked happier.

Perhaps it was only the reflected brightness from the great fire that glowed and flamed beneath the marble chimney-piece, where the flower-crowned nymph still clung, but rightside up now ; she having been restored to her proper position by one of the lads with a turn for such things ; and no doubt such light does fall pleasantly upon the people that are within its radius. But something more shone in the eyes of the boys who crowded about the long table ; a reflection, not from fire or flaring lamp, but from some holy flame that shone, one might suppose, about Miss Julia herself.

This poor sempstress was not young, or clever, or beautiful ; she wasn't even educated, beyond the barest rudiments of reading, writing and figures. Yet she accomplished what many a trained teacher fails to

do. She won the love of the lads she taught. To many of them, she represented all the kindness they had ever known. The evenings at night school were the only home-y bits in their hard lives. It is not easy to realise the truth of this ; nevertheless it is true.

" You're late, Tim Carty ! " said Miss Julia, raising an admonitory pencil, and speaking in a tone of would-be severity, which seemed only to broaden the smile on Tim's face ; " we're done our spellin' ; but who's this we have here ? Dinny, is it ? and what brings him here, and he going to a real school, eh ? "

" Me that brought him, Miss, the way he wouldn't be too lonesome wid Bride kep' late at the Shop, and . . . "

" Make room for Dinny, boys there in front ! " commanded Miss Julia ; " he looks perished-looking, and as if he had a cold ! "

So those next the fire drew back, and Dinny found himself installed, amid smiles of welcome, in the best seat ; while Tim, with the air of one quite at home, produced a slate from some corner, and sat down, his eyes fixed on his teacher.

" Not yet, Tim," she said ; " we'll have a song first . . . Which of you'll sing ' The Memory of the Dead ' for me ? "

Half a dozen grimy young hands were thrust aloft, to signify the willingness of their owners to comply with the request. But Miss Julia held her pencil aloft.

" What about you, Katty ? " she said, very softly, over her shoulder. Dinny looked, and there, sitting on the ground, was Katty the Wran. The boys had succeeded in getting her cloak out of pawn for her ; it lay at her feet ; but round her twisted little figure,

she had so adjusted Tim's scarf as to screen her deformity. Miss Julia had carefully combed out her long thick hair also ; her eyes shone, her thin cheeks flushed with happiness, as she began to sing.

Now you could understand why she was called " the Wran." Such a volume of sound as she poured forth ! With what energy, what pathos did she sing ! about the long-dead and banished ones . . . She forgot that she was deformed ; she rose to her feet and sang, her eyes fixed on Miss Julia ; then, when the last word had died away, she sank into her place again.

Miss Julia wiped her spectacles, and sighed ; then, briskly, " Come now, your tables, boys ! " and instantly the boys began chanting that necessary but abhorrent task. Then came another song ; then a writing-lesson ; then sums ; then a chorus ; reading ; and the school was over.

Except prayers. The one thing in the room not absolutely grim in its ugliness was the chimney-piece already described. On it there now stood a figure of the Mother, with the Child in her arms ; a rough, crudely-coloured thing, and yet it retained some of the grace of the beautiful object from which it had originated. In front of it, there was a jug without a handle, filled with wall-flowers. They made a spot of beauty and of fragrance amid the shabbiness and poverty of the place. The boys knelt, with their faces towards this shrine and prayed aloud, Miss Julia leading them ; then they sang a hymn, and then, with a cheerful salutation to their teacher, they all trooped off.

It was curious to observe the look of anxiety, even

DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

of sorrow that settled on their faces, as they were leaving that room ; as if the hard cruelty of the world they were going back to began to grip them again. But for all that, it had been good for them to have been there ; to have had, even for an hour or two, the sense that some one *understood*.

We superior ones are given to asking, why these people, men and women, boys and girls and little children, hang about the dingy, often filthy streets, sometimes talking, sometimes playing rather rough tricks. Where else can they go ? What else is there for them to do, except drink ?—a very objectionable practice, no doubt. Why won't we understand ?

A lovely, dainty and very kind-hearted woman, when leaving the hospital in the wards of which she had been busy for hours, comforting the sufferers by her sympathy and patient hearkening to their complaints, poor souls . . . well, she was overheard to express utter disgust at the sight of some navvies, eating their dinners and drinking from bottles, seated in a dirty yard. Did she really think they would not have preferred a properly appointed dining-table ? that they were uncomfortable from choice ? She had just presented a little patient in the children's ward with a shilling, to console him during some painful dressing ; and then had asked, to divert his thoughts, what he would buy with it ? Sweets—a toy ?

" I'll save it to get a cap, when I go out, Miss," says this prematurely prudent creature of perhaps seven.

Thus early in life do the Tims and Dinnys learn the real use of money ; and thus do they learn contentment without its dissipations.

When they were gone, " You're stopping with

Mrs. Molally to-night ? ” Miss Julia asked Dinny ; and receiving a timid “ Yes, Miss,” in reply, she went on, “ Well for them that has a spot to put down their heads ! There’s a couple or three of my boys, hasn’t one to turn to, only themselves. Many’s the night I do be lamenting them ! Sleeping under a cart, or maybe the eye of a bridge along the canal bank ; or in an entry. . . . But go down now the two of yous to the cellar to Granny ; I have to be off middling early in the morning . . . ”

“ You’d wonder how at all Miss Julia stands it,” Tim declared to Granny and Bride who were awaiting him and Dinny in the cellar ; “ the tired way she does be coming back from her work of an evening, and then having the school ”

“ Who does the leathering ? ” enquired Brigit.

“ Sure there does be noan there ; not as much as a pandy ! ”

“ And what does Miss Julia do, if any of the lads gets impident or beyant themselves, lek ? ” asked Granny, anxious to intervene between Tim and the withering comment she foresaw from Brigit.

“ What does she do, is it ? Just holds up her bit of a pencil, and not one dar’ say ‘ boo ! ’ I tell ye if anyone there gave any lip, it’s what the rest of us would murther him ! ay, as ready as ait your dinner, so we would ! ”

“ And now, when yous have it all off that she can teach yous, do you just quit off, or what ? ”

“ Och not at all ! Only any boy that’s fit, she’ll get a place for. It’s as good as a kerackthur to a body to be able to say you’re one of Miss Julia’s boys ! ”

“ Och, have done now,” said Brigit, “ till you’ll hear

what's after happening . . . I went over to see how Herself was goan on in that place she's moved into, I'm thinking she'll not leave us much longer here . . . Whisht, now, Dinny ! Sure it's not goan to cry y'are for the lek of her ! Didn't you know we'd have to go after her ? "

" God help my little man ! " said Granny ; " improved well so he did since we were all together down here . . . If only she'd leave yous here with me ! "

" She'll not ! " said Brigit ; " so we needn't mind thinking about that ! But what do you think, only an' I coming out of the door, the postman was there and handed me a letter ! "

And she held it up for inspection. They all gazed at the rarity.

" An American letter, that should be," said Tim, with the finality of an expert.

" Wouldn't any fool know that, by the stamp that's upon it ! " said Brigit, scornfully ; " but is it for me it is, at all at all ? "

She had never had a letter written to her before ; at least none had ever reached her.

" Sure, who else ! " said Tim.

Brigit continued to look at the envelope.

" Who can have wrote it ? " she said, almost apprehensively.

" Open it, why don't you, and see ! " urged Tim.

So the letter was at last opened and read aloud, slowly.

It ran somewhat as follows :

" MY DEAR NIECE,—I take up my pen to write you those few lines, hoping they will find you in good

health, as they leave me at this present, thank you and God. Dear Brigit, it's what I thought to hear from you about the money I sent you those few times ; so no more till I hear did you get it or not . . ."

"Sure what at all does that mean?" said Brigit, excitedly. "I got no money from her or anyone else, God knows!"

"From America? It's what it could have gone astray on the way over," said Granny; "look at the big wide waters it had to cross!"

"But doesn't there be sackfuls of letters coming, as well as that one of Bride's!" said Tim.

"Maybe if we asked the postman," said Granny, "there might be some account to be got; a very decent poor boy he is, nowadays impident . . ."

"Ora, what account! And we wanting it . . . and now, whatever happened it, we'll get no more . . ."

"Sure why wouldn't you? See who the letter's from," said Tim.

Bride began again deciphering the almost illegible scrawl. It went on: "Doran, your very father left this, and it's what he must be dead or he'd not have staid working so long, and not be back looking for assistance again from me . . . there was a horrid accident in the mine I told you he was in . . . and no loss, the Lord have marcy on his soul, that never was anything only a heartscald from the day your mother poor Marg took and marrit him; that's what I always heard, and never laid an eye on him till he walked in here; and whether it was himself that was in it that day or not sure a body couldn't well know . . . so no more now from your afexshunit AUNT KATE."

Any girl that has a mind to work gets good money out here, so what do you say to coming out."

"That's the name that's wrote in the old prayer-book, along with our Mother's! See here!"

Brigit rushed to the shelf and snatched from amid Granny's plates and cups, where she had had it in safe keeping, the prayer-book that once reposed above the marble nymph, on the chimney-piece in the room where Dinny had been born. She opened it, and there, sure enough, were the two names written, "Kate and Margaret Cullen."

"Tubbe sure they're there, why wouldn't they!" said Granny; "the two darlint fine girls that they were Och Brigeen, you that would be made up, in earnest, if you could only get to go! I seen girls going out and coming back in a short while, wid the wealth of the world in clothes . . ."

"There's them says, America's no good, those times; only full up of the Black Ammonia and all sorts of divilment!" said Tim, gloomily.

"Who says that, only them that never was there, like yourself, Tim Carty!" said Brigit, severely, "and now let you hold your whist and not be puttin' in your gab where it's not wanting!"

At that moment when peace was trembling in the balance, "What's a trouble to you, Dinny?" said Granny, softly; "come over here to meself, and tell me all about it . . ."

Dinny flung himself upon that welcoming lap.

"I don't want Brigeen to go!" he sobbed.

"Sure what at all! and maybe won't get to go, ever! She's not gone yet, acushla!"

"I'll not go without you, whatever, Dinny; and

mind now what I'm telling you!" said Brigit with sudden tenderness," and moreover I doubt will I get to go at all! Sure where would I be to write! the letter doesn't say . . ."

"Let you not be talking foolishness!" said Tim; "here, give us a look at it . . ."

And they all scanned the letter, from beginning to end. No address was there.

"Well, doesn't that bate!" said Granny; "but sure even so, we're no worse off nor what we were before. But mind and don't let on about the letter to Herself!"

"Och, why would we do that? Do you think would she have got the others that me Aunt Kate says she sent me?"

"I wouldn't put it past her!" said Tim; "and took the money that was meant for you!"

"Sure no one would go do such an ugly turn as that!" said Granny. It hurt her still to have to "think bad" of anyone.

"It's no use, lamenting them things now," said Brigit; "only if me Aunt Kate was to take and write again . . ."

"She'll not do that, when she doesn't get an answer from you! And you can't write when you don't know where she is," said Tim, curiously elated now that the chances of Brigeen's departure for America, that Eldorado of young Erin, were dwindling into nothingness.

"Terrible lonesome I'll be now, with yous gone off from me!" said Granny, mournfully.

That abode of hers wasn't exactly ideal. But when she had the young life about her, she would forget

how damp and cheerless and gloomy that cellar was, And then, as she often said, "It's a great thing to a body to be to theirselves!" meaning, the comfort of being sole tenant of the cellar.

It was the charm of this solitude that, after—a long way after—Granny herself, endeared this home to the young Dorans, otherwise obliged to dwell in the midst of alarms difficult to realise without actual experience. And these would be worse, now that Herself in her turn was to be only a lodger. She and the children were to have share only of a room with a miscellaneous and intermittent muster of inhabitants. One feature they had in common, poverty; and one pleasure, drink. How could any of the respectable virtues exist in such a place? Honesty, Cleanliness, Industry, Temperance; all these worthy attributes fled in disgust; but where they could find no room, a gentle Charity, in unexpected ways, insisted on showing itself to Bride and Dinny. Indeed these young and often sorely harried beings would feel a certain security from harm in the presence of others in that crowded room, when Herself would be "goan on wid her work."

CHAPTER VI

A DOORSTEP AT THE CATTLE MARKET

ABOUT this time, another cloud began to darken Dinny's outlook upon life. Brigit being a bright, handy child, quick at picking up her duties in the corner-shop, the mistress thereof, Mrs. Byrne, who was as easy-going as her husband was stirring, determined to make further use of the little girl. Bride was to stay on with her till late at night, washing, sweeping and so on ; in return for which services, she was to get her supper, and " chances," in the way of scraps of food, cast-off clothes, etc., as well as an odd extra sixpence, if she minded herself and gev no impidence.

" It's no great shakes of a job, whatever way you look at it," observed Brigit sapiently when telling Granny of this change of prospects, " but sure I may's well try it for a bit and see how it'll turn out."

" Tubbe sure and you may ! " said Granny, " only what'll Herself say to it, I dunno ? "

" Tearin' mad she'll be ! " said Tim, who had dropped down to the cellar for a chat before night-school.

" Let her tear away, and the divel may care ! For I don't ! " said Brigit, valiantly ; " much about her ! "

" You're able for her now, I wouldn't wonder ? " asked Tim, with the half-deprecating air he was beginning to assume towards Brigen.

" Not all out," returned that sturdy person ; " but still I can mostly get the better of her. It's Dinny that'll be the worst."

"Without you of an evening, is it? Can't he be coming about with me and he'll not be lonesome," said Tim.

"She'll not let him, you'll find! just to have him tormented! Hadn't I to threaten the po-lis on her the other night, the way she was goan on at him! She might have some lenity in her and he that weakly . . . and has him gone off wid her this present evening, God knows where . . ."

"Miss Julia that was reading last night out of a paper for us at night-school, about a society that keeps people from being too hard on their children; flamming them or turning them out or . . ."

"What would they do wid Herself, I wonder?" said Brigit, "They'd want to be up middling early of a morning, to be up to her tricks!"

"Glory be!" said Granny, crossing herself; "a society to keep the people right wid their own children! Isn't it a fright, to think of the wickedness of the world! to say that anyone would be bad and wicked to a child, let alone their own child . . .!"

Now Brigit was right in all she had said. Little she cared what her step-mother did, as far as she herself was concerned; but Dinny! There too, unluckily, she was right. She did her best to shield him, but he had had to suffer many things from which she could not protect him.

"So you're off from me altogether now!" she said, Mrs. Doran I mean, to Brigit; "me that reared you, as a body might say; but what else! Kind father for you! didn't he desert me too! Snaked off and left me here with his two useless babbies on me hands. And now when you might be some use to me to say you're to be off the entire day . . . Well, if that's the way of it, Dinny'll have to make up . . ."

"And what at all she has in her mind now, I know no more nor the dead!" commented Brigit, when recounting this to Granny; "of course she's at the loss of what I used to be gev in the streets. I was afeard she'd want to stop me goan to the shop at all, she was that mad! But Dinny . . .!"

"God help him, the crathur! sure he'll never be able to be goan about at night wid only himself, if that's what she's at! But don't fret acushla!" she added, seeing Brigit was on the verge of tears; "maybe it won't be as bad all out as you think."

"You'd have to pity him, she has him in that great a dread of her!" said Brigit, with a sob; "maybe it's what I ought to give up the shop altogether? But then what would Miss Ruth say . . .?"

"We'll just wait a while, and see how she goes on," said Granny; "we'll soon find out what she's at about Dinny . . ."

They did.

Not so very far from New Street there is a rather lonely road, a private way belonging to a railway, to the terminus of which this road leads. Here, at dusk of a winter's evening, Dinny found himself planted and enjoined to beg from the people who would be hurrying by to the railway, . . . to beg, "or . . ."

Dinny could guess the rest.

It was a bleak, ill-lit place. With an unexpected eye to the picturesque, Himself snatched off the child's cap, so as to show his curling fair hair; and that, combined with his bare feet and small, wan face, made up a pitiful object enough.

And besides the customary appeal of Dinny's looks there was terror in his eyes, because he didn't know where he was, or how long he would be left

there ; just Dinny wid not one only himself ; no Bride or even Tim Carty to look to. A pitiable little person he was, frightened and helpless ; so that many a passer-by was moved to compassion, and many a copper was dropped into his thin little hand, with the remark that he oughtn't to be out so late there ! As if he wanted to ! There would be a little stream of travellers hurrying for every train, past where Dinny had been posted. When they would all have gone, and the roadway would be clear and deserted once more, a furtive, battered, tattered figure would appear from behind one of the trees that line the road, and taking from Dinny whatever money he had been given, would slink off a few yards to a neighbouring publichouse. This would be repeated till the last train would have gone. Then Dinny would be allowed to creep home, following Herself at a safe distance.

It was all dreadful to him. Things were made no better for him, even by a bit of well-considered interference.

"What brings you here so late, little boy ?" a lady who was passing one evening stopped to ask.

Dinny's answer came prompt and glib.

"Looking for a little assistance, your honour's ladyship ! Just a penny to get a cup of tea, for the love of God and His holy Saints . . ."

"You have no business to be here !" she said, and went on without giving him anything. This was partly because she had a queer creepy feeling . . . some skulking figure on the watch close by that she wanted to avoid . . . partly that it wasn't right at all to encourage children like that . . . though I dare say if she had known what her omission cost Dinny, in

the shape of a savage pinch to "put a stir on him," she might have wavered in her virtuous resolution. And after all indeed, a pinch! Dinny was too miserable to care about that.

The lady, however unheeding she seemed, didn't forget the little beggar.

"It's a sin," she thought, "to see that child there! and so late! I'll write to the Children's Society . . . they ought to take up the case . . ."

So she did that, and an Inspector duly appeared.

"Why are you here?" this strange sort of a gentleman said, very gently, so that Dinny, looking timidly up into a very kind face, thought he might reply. But before he could say anything . . . and it's pretty doubtful what Dinny would have said—his step-mother rushed out from her hiding-place behind the tree, and Dinny felt his hand being taken in hers, as she said, "An' is it here you are, the Lord forgive you, for the fright you're after giving me! Wild and arch in himself he is, sir," she went on, turning to the Inspector, "and has me heart-scalded, so he has, the way he does be getting on and can't be kept off of the streets only running about. . . ."

"I'm sorry to hear that!" said the Inspector; "he must behave better and do what's he told or he'll be getting himself into trouble"

"There, now! isn't that what I'm always telling him; but he'll not heed a word I say! Sure it's hard to be continding with them young boys . . . It's what he has got into bad company. A poor widdy woman like me with a houseful of them to be striving for had enough to do and not be watching them at every turn . . ."

DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

"Where do you live? I'll come round and see how this boy is behaving . . ."

"Green Street, number three, sir, and proud I'll be to see you!"

The Inspector thanked her very gravely for this quite imaginary address, and went off, saying to himself that he didn't think he might bother going *there*! He'd look up the child again there at night . . .

And while he was thus meditating, Dinny was being exhorted, after this fashion: "Ha! him indeed, and his chat. And a soart of a uniform upon him, too! Now listen to me, and whenever you see the like of that cap wid the gold band coming along, let you make no delay, only hide! If once that fellah was to catch you, it's what he might be getting you hung as soon as look at ye!"

This is how, when the Inspector did go back to look for Dinny, he couldn't find the child, though he made several attempts. But the lady who had had him sent there, saw Dinny again, begging and very wretched.

"They don't seem to take much trouble, even when you do try to help on the work by pointing out a case!" she thought; and decided to send her usual subscription to them to a Foreign Mission instead.

So it was that in spite of some efforts at least being made on his behalf, Dinny found no relief from that miserable trade of his. Sometimes those who passed would say, "I'll give you nothing—be off, you're just a nuisance! I've a mind to give you in charge!"

But more often it was the hand into the pocket, and the bestowal of alms, with the comforting reflection,

" Anyway, poor little chap, that will get him a cake, or shelter to-night ! "

It chanced one evening while Dinny was still on duty that a terrible storm rose. The wind was high, and the rain, sweeping in white sheets with it, deluged the streets. Everyone who could fled to shelter, and the passengers who were hurrying by to the station were naturally loath to delay to extract a copper for Dinny, who with his rags dripping and hands and feet blue with cold as he stood in the storm, was more pitiable than ever.

And now, behold the anomaly of the thing ! Just when he wanted help worst, he got none. One after another, all passed him by, like the priest and Levite of old. Dinny realised despairingly that the last passenger had gone to the last train, and not a copper had he to offer as oblation on the altar of the step-mother's wrath.

There he stood, balancing himself first on one foot, then on the other, as he shivered on the muddy kerb, his numbed hands thrust inside his wet jacket ; every now and then he would look over at the tree from behind which Herself was wont to emerge. But she did not appear.

He didn't want her to come ! he knew how angry she would be. He dreaded what would follow ; and no Brigreen by to shield him and take the punishment on her own plucky young shoulders. But supposen she didn't come ! Supposen she had forgotten him ! How would he ever find his way home, wid no one only himself ! and the streets that throng, and it dark too. But supposen she was to come and not find him there !

While he was slowly going over all these perplexities, growing colder and more tired every moment, behold ! along came his Good Samaritan, in the shape of Tim Carty, brisk and brave, though less cheery than usual, as he came peering through the dim spaces between the very indifferent lamps that Dublin supplies to her patient citizens. Dinny's heart leaped up.

"Tim !" he ventured to call out.

And then Tim saw him.

"Hullo ! so here you are ! Come along ou'er that !"

"Sure how can I, and Herself not after bidding me ! Won't she be only mad . . . ?"

"Mad is it ?—she's drunk, I tell ye—parlattick drunk, so she is ; so you've no call to be here waiting on her and her vagaries. Got into hoults with another woman there below at the bar ; faith they have one another half kilt, so they have ! You'd have to laugh to see the way they clung in one another's hair, and scratched and bit like a pair of wild cats . . . !"

"I . . . I wish she was deaded !" said Dinny, with timid wrath.

"It would be a great ease for yourself and Brigeen, no doubt," said Tim, "and sure, maybe so she is. Took off to hospital the two of them wor . . . but see now, Dinny, I can't be delaying me time here . . . I just came along to tell you what happened . . . What are you goan to do ?"

"I'd like to go to Granny's" said Dinny eagerly.

"H-away with you then ; but I'm goan to the Cattle Market . . ."

"Is it that you're not goan back at all to-night ?"

"No, but sure, let you go if you like . . . ! . . . I . . . I have business beyant there, and you have to be real early in it . . ."

"What will you be doing there, Tim?"

"Let you ask no questions and then you'll be told no lies," said Tim; "I've no time to be explaining the thing to you now; but look slippy and make up your mind what you'll do . . ."

"I'm terrible cold!" said Dinny. He was thinking with longing of Granny's comfortable lap by the fire she always managed somehow to keep going.

"Well, let you plase yourself!" and Tim turned away.

Dinny hesitated no longer. He could never make his way back to Granny's alone.

"I'll stop along wid you," he said.

"That's right! come along . . . there does be a grand fire there in the street, all night, by reason that the roads is getting repaired or pipes laid down or something like that . . . and there has to be a watchman there all night to keep people from falling into the deep trench that's dug there . . . and has to keep himself warm . . . oh, a decent poor lame fellah he is, and will let us get a heat of the fire . . ."

And off Tim set; having made his explanation, he forged ahead, more silent than usual, as if some thought was oppressing him. But Dinny scarcely noticed this, as he trotted along at the heels of the bigger boy; fearing greatly was Dinny, yet inclined for adventure. Tim was in it with him, and Tim's manner, always sure of himself, inspired confidence in the weaker vessel.

The rain had ceased, and the wind was going down.

They reached the outskirts of the great cattle market. There, just as Tim had said, was the road all ripped up, and a fire blazing in a queer kind of iron basket on legs. The flames blew here and there, but yet comfort came from that glowing hearth. And there, too, was the decent lame old man, crouching close to the warmth, and he made no objection to sharing it with the children. Indeed, seeing that Dinny was hanging back, he drew him closer into the circle of light and heat, and took the little boy on that lame corduroy knee of his, and began chafing his stiff, chilly feet and hands.

"You've no call to be here so late, sonny," he said, "it's at home wid the mother you should be . . ."

"Sure isn't that what we're goan to do, sir!" said Tim with the respect due to the man in command of a fire.

"It's where you should be, the both of yous!" said the lame man, "but as yous are here, you may's well have a bit to eat. . ."

And he produced some slices of bread and cold bacon, and a small can, which he set on the coals to warm. When it began to steam, he poured a little of the contents into the lid, and offered it to the children. He said it was coffee. Perhaps it was, but whatever strange compound it may have been, it tasted like nectar to the famished children. It was hot and sweet; and when they had swallowed it, the blood seemed to course again quick and warm through their veins.

"There now, that'll do," said the man, in a good-natured kind of a growl; "and let the two of yous be off . . ."

"And is it that you kept none for yourself, sir?" said Tim.

"Sure, why would he!" said a man from a group of loiterers that had just drawn up to the fire; "the wife that does fill that can for him, but it's seldom you empty it, eh, Mike?"

"Mike would sooner be slipping into the bar beyant for a drink, and faith! small blame to him! I'm of the same opinion myself; so come along..."

So the men went off towards the bright cheery light that came from the windows of a neighbouring drink-shop; and Tim, having been roughly bidden to "cut his lucky out of that afore they came back," sloped off, followed by Dinny.

"See here!" said Tim, stopping before a very old house, the door of which was approached by three or four worn steps, "it's here I have it laid out to wait... we'll have good shelter..."

"What'll we stop here for?" asked Dinny. He thought that having seen the market and having been warmed and fed, they would go home together.

"A thing I have to do..." Tim stopped short at that; then, "Sure whoever got a job here, only by waiting all night! and these steps does be very handy..."

So they sat down on the door-steps, to wait till morning there. Presently Dinny, a modern young Eutychus, began to sink down in sleep, and made as if he would have lain upon the cold stone.

"Sit up, Dinny!" exhorted Tim; "sure, you'll get your death of cold if you go sleep like that!"

And Dinny straightened up, with eyes closing, heavy with drowsiness; then began to droop again.

So Tim crept over beside him and put his arms round his little companion ; and soon after he, too, drooped his head, and they both fell asleep, having got themselves into the least observable position possible.

And there they slumbered soundly, in spite of much noise, and the confusion inseparable from the task of receiving and getting into place of so many beasts. All night this was going on. Great droves of cattle, often tired and thirsty from a long journey, coming here from lovely country peace . . .

It is not pleasant to think of. They were made, so we are told, for the use of man ; well . . . !

And the drovers ; the hard, anxious work it is they do ! Out all night ; and nothing to be had but drink ; that's not pleasant either ; and they don't generally behave ideally ; but is it sensible to turn up horrified eyes and say " Brutes ! "

And why " Brutes " ? Do dumb beasts ever act with what is mis-called " brutality " to one another let alone make " brutes " of themselves by self-indulgence !

Indeed they may be turning the tables on us ; communing peacefully in some rushy summer pool, or moving slowly, with deep fragrant breathings along some wild lovely hedgerow, and talking over the terrible " human-ness " of some recreant young bullock or the " manliness " of an obstreperous steer.

The night was filled with wild hoarse shoutings, and frightened bellowings ; with stamping, stumbling feet ; with occasional mad rushes that had to be checked somehow. The two children were unconscious of all this, as well as of the great heads that would now and then be stretched towards them, big soft

eyes would peer, unseeing, at them; honey-sweet breath of kine would be wafted across their sleeping faces.

Now and then, too, some drunken man would reel by, cursing the slippery pavement; the cold; the muddy slushy street; the cattle

Suddenly, after some hours of this, the children were roused by a voice demanding in tone of authority, "What has yous here this time of night? Be off home wid yiz! Wake up, now, and be smart about it!"

And at this, Tim, the more alert of the two sleepers, did wake, to behold a policeman, big and red-faced, stooping towards them.

"What call have yous, to be lying here, goan asleep?" he demanded, sternly.

"Waiting we are, sir, on the chance of a job in the morning," Tim stammered, not much more than half awake yet.

"A chance of a job! and who'd be fool enough to give a job to the likes of yous! Here now, make yourselves scarce, the both of yous . . ."

Tim reluctantly got on his feet; and Dinny, missing the comfort of his supporting arm, opened his eyes, and started with terror when he found where he was, and before whom . . . He said nothing, only tried to shrink as far as possible from the majestic eye of the law.

Tim gave him a little jerk.

"Yes, sir," he said, "come along now, Dinny . . . yes, Sir! sure we're goan as soon as ever the little fellah gets the use of his legs; it's cramped they are 'on' him . . ."

"Let yous make no delay now!" commanded that

doughty policeman; and strode heavily away, comfortable in the conviction that he had done his duty and them imps of chaps wouldn't dar neglect what he was after bidding them.

Tim managed to hoist Dinny to his feet, and tried to lead him away, amid yawns, and doubts as to where they could bestow themselves for the rest of the night. But Dinny was drunk with sleep; if there be such a form of intoxication! There come such moments; if the fate of all you held dear depended on your keeping awake, you couldn't, short of measures too heroic for practical use at such times.

Dinny sank down again and fell asleep.

Tim stood over him in despair. What at all was he to do! He couldn't desert Dinny; his code of honour forbade such treachery. Besides, what would Bride say, if he let anything be done "on" Dinny! Furthermore, he was fond of the yoong fellah himself.

But what was he to do? He was dog-tired too, and full of sleep. He tried to carry Dinny away; but he was quite unable to raise the dead weight of even so thin a thing as Dinny from the ground. Only in story-books are such deeds done.

He was shouting agitatedly into Dinny's unheeding ear, "Stir yourself, will ye! and bad scran to ye! there'll be a bullock on the top of ye if you don't mind . . ." when behold! Help from an unexpected quarter.

It was the lame watchman on one of his many trips to the publichouse.

"Is it here yiz are? Sure this is no place for yous . . ."

"It's what I can't get to waken the young fellah

at all at all ! ” explained Tim, with a suspicion of tears in his voice ; “ do nothing so he won’t only go asleep ‘ on ’ me, and the po-lisman after noticing us to be off . . . and if we do, won’t I lose the chance of getting to help to drive some stock . . . and . . . and . . . ”

And with that, Tim did really lose his pluck, for once, and began muttering with a choke in his voice something about a Wran, and a poor misfortunate little crathureen that stood no chance . . . and how would ye like it yourself to be having the Union to bury you !

The watchman’s step was more unsteady than even his lame leg could well account for, and his speech was a bit thick ; all the same, he was able to do Tim a good turn ; and he did it, too.

“ Let you ketch a houlth of his one arm,” he ordered, “ and I’ll take the other, and between the both of us we’ll get to bring him, ready enough, across to a little canoe of a place I do sometimes get into ; a corner of a hay-shed it is ; and on account of me being well acquainted with the head-beetler there, he’ll be apt to let yous in, if I speak a word for you . . . ”

So Dinny was somehow got across the indescribable street ; the trio avoided by some extraordinary luck the furious stampede of a drove of cattle, and reached the promised haven in safety.

They might have been much worse off. Probably indeed neither of the boys had ever had so wholesome a sleeping-place before. The shed was airy and weather-tight ; they lay upon sweet dry hay, that smelt still of the wide quiet meadows where it had grown.

Outside the night was filled with stamping feet ; with shouts and cursings ; with inarticulate, indignant bellowings. Sometimes more plaintive sounds made

themselves heard ; the pathetic, half-human voice of young lambs, parted from their fond, if stupid mothers; the cries of calves, bound and helpless and stiff often after long journeyings.

But Tim and Dinny slept through it all, till men began to stir about the sheds, very early, before light was fully come, in order to be ready for the business to follow.

Tim woke, alert and ready at once ; and Dinny, somewhat refreshed by his sleep, went forth with him. Armed with sticks, they made at once for the standings where the sales take place ; slipped through the gates unobserved and ran here and there among the alleys, Tim in front, glancing from side to side, Dinny keeping as close to him as he could. Tim had a thing in his mind ; still, the life and bustle of the place did somewhat divert his attention from this object, whatever it was.

“ Look at them big bullocks ! ” he said ; “ and they shut in there, see now, you can be giving them an odd prod and you goan by . . . look at the way they’ll kick wid the pure timper if you hit them a clout . . ! ”

And Dinny beheld with admiration the skill with which Tim would administer thrust or blow to some tired beast standing patiently enough, God knows ! awaiting its turn for sale.

Suddenly, “ What are you at here, you young blackguards ! ” shouted a salesman ; “ be off out of this ! If I catch you touching any of the cattle . . . ” and he added, when Tim and Dinny had run off, “ it’s a disgrace, letting those young boys in here . . . well, what offer are you making ? ”

Cautiously the two adventurers were making their way along, when suddenly Tim brought himself up

short, at sight of a gentleman who was coming towards them ; and when they came close, he touched his cap, with a very eager look. The gentleman stopped, and looked at Tim with a very queer face, Dinny thought ; as if he wanted to be cross and couldn't.

" Well, here you are again," he said ; " turning up like a bad halfpenny ! you know you've no business here ! I've nothing for you ! I told the little girl that . . . the little dwarf with the voice . . . she used to be always coming here . . . And you'd better take warning too ; you'll get yourselves into trouble . . . coming here all the winter she was, every week . . . singing, or selling matches . . . she got to be a regular nuisance . . . "

" She'll not be an annoyance any more, then," said Tim, " it's dead she is . . . "

" What ! Not the child that . . . but hold on, now there, come into the office . . . now, tell me . . . "

And then Tim laid his head down upon his ragged sleeve and cried ; to Dinny's slow amazement, which grew, as the gentleman began to ask all about it. Dinny saw tears in his eyes too, as Tim told him about the Wran ; how the cough had got the better of her altogether, this while back, so as that she mightn't mind goan out to sing, for you couldn't hear her in the street. And she had a stopping-place she used to creep into, unnonst, at night, since the mother died on her and the old man was took to the Union. And she had no call to go next nor near them houses because they were condemned, and sure enough, didn't they all bow out into the street ; and a brick hit the Wran and she just died off . . . And Miss Julia didn't wish

she'd be buried by the parish, and they had nearly enough gathered to buy the coffin ; it's a small one would do the Wran, she was that little . . ."

" Oh stop, stop ! " said the gentleman, putting his hand over his eyes ; and Dinny heard him saying to himself, " to think I hunted her off, the last time she came . . . How much are you short ? " he said to Tim.

" Och, a lot, sir . . . five shillings we want still ; but sure we'll maybe make it up . . . "

" Here ! " said the gentleman ; and he pulled out a handful of silver, and gave it to Tim.

Tim looked up at him with dancing eyes.

" Sure that's more . . . It's too good you are, sir . . . "

" Get whatever's right . . . "

" Miss Julia was wishful for a wrade . . . of flowers, sir . . . the way the thing wouldn't be too lonesome-lookin' . . . She that'll be proud of this money . . . I needn't look for a job here now at all ! "

" Run off now, " said the gentleman, looking half ashamed of himself ; " I'm busy. . . "

" And may the Lord above reward ye ! "

Tim disposed of the coins in some inner fastness of his person, and the two went off. Dinny was dazed by the news, for news it was to him, about the Wran. Dinny was one of the people who never know what's happening. But before he had time to make up his mind to ask further particulars, Tim's attention was caught by a drove of sheep being driven by. They were that stupid—running up side streets ; getting into corners to pant ; rushing affrightedly in front of carts and trams

Tim, with a word to Dinny to keep close, at once began lending help. Through what seemed to Dinny inextricable and perilous confusion, his leader kept his head; now running on in front, now doubling back, to bring up some straggler with a timely prod of his pointed stick. The drover proper, who looked harassed and weary, thanked Tim, and gave him a penny for his trouble, as he finally disposed of the flock, into a butcher's yard.

"It does be grand, to get inside, where they do be killing the cattle and sheep!" said Tim.

Dinny listened admiringly. Tim was a good deal of a hero to him.

It isn't to be supposed that Tim was forgetful of the Wran. It's not only the Tims that seek surcease of sorrow by some distraction for thought. Nor that he was specially cruel. But he craved excitement; especially just then.

Higher in the social scale, that same desire for excitement leads people, women as well as men and boys, to go shooting or hunting or, worse, coursing. The excitement of a slaughter-house is less agreeably presented to its votaries. But they are not to be blamed because the pleasures within their reach are often of a brutalising kind.

Tim, and Dinny at his heels, watched an opportunity and slipped inside the butcher's . . .

Presently, before many minutes had passed, the doors through which they had entered were flung open, and a big, busy, angry-faced man strode forth, carrying Dinny, lying unconscious in his arms.

"Take him away out of this!" said the butcher to Tim, who for once looked frightened; "and if ever I

catch any of you again about my place, I'll get you put up—so now mind!" and with a curse or two, to relieve his feelings, he went back to his work.

"Get up, Dinny. Sure you're all right now!" said Tim, holding Dinny's head on his knees and feeling utterly miserable. Supposen Dinny was to take and go die on him! And how was a body to know that the kid would mind things that-a-way! He wisht to the Lord he had him home again!

"Dinny . . . !"

And now another trouble loomed up; at least that is how Tim regarded the advent of the big po-lisman who had moved them on the night before. He was approaching them now in slow majesty.

But seeing Tim's great distress, and that Dinny was in a pretty bad way, he relented. Po-lisman and all as he was, he was human.

"Here, I've the way!" he said; and he took Dinny up in his arms, as easily as if he was a stray kitten, intending to carry him to a coffee-stall a bit away, he said to Tim, following behind.

But before he had gone many steps, Dinny revived. He unclosed his eyes, then, in terror at this strange position, "Tim! Tim! save me!" he screamed out, and struggled to get free.

"If it would be plasins' to you, sir, to give him to me now, sir . . .," Tim begged, sorely distressed. He, too, didn't know what might not be going to happen next! Maybe they were goan to "get pull't" the same as Mrs. Doran; a fate not without glory but suggestive also of very possible horrors.

The great man relented. He set Dinny down, where he looked like a bird, fascinated and helpless

within the reach of a cat's claws. He needn't have been so terrified. There are streaks of humanity, even in po-lis-men.

"How far have yous to go?" he asked; and when he heard he gave Tim pennies to take the tram home.

"I'm thankful to you, sir!" said the agitated Tim, only half believing in this unexpected happening. Dinny with a final sob put his hand in Tim's and was led away by that trusty friend.

During the exciting and novel experience of going along outside the tram, "Terrible good sort, that bobby was!" said Tim; "there's some of them doesn't be too contrary at all! Paddy Nouns that was telling me, he was bathing one time below there at Sandymount, and there was a po-lis-man in the salt water at the same time, and Paddy says you wouldn't know him from any other man . . . But where'll you go now, Dinny? Herself not there, and Brigeen should have went to school by this . . ."

These considerations had not occurred to Dinny. And now he began to wonder, would Brigeen be vexed with him? Had she missed him much last night—she would always snug up whatever covering they had, round his shoulders. . . And Mr. Byrne and the papers . . . He'd lose his job there; a reflection not altogether disagreeable, till Tim observed nonchalantly, "You're as apt as not to get the sack now from Byrne's!"

The words were like a cold stone on the little boy's heart; so terrible sometimes is it to have your hidden surmises put into words by another.

What would Miss Ruth say; let alone Brigeen!

"I believe it's what I'll go to Granny's," he ventured.

To his relief, Tim approved; leaped jauntily from the car, and disappeared, with a word to the conductor where to set Dinny down.

Dinny's first doorstep! Slowly he sauntered along. He never was quick about anything; why hurry now—wasn't he late anyway!

The street was sordid and uninviting as ever; but thanks to the Guild, the tenement-house showed a marked improvement. Why, there wasn't a rag to be seen stuffing a broken pane, anywhere! all whole and mended.

As Dinny was making his way down the dim staircase that led to Granny's gloomy if loved abode, he heard a strange sound. Some one was crying there!

There was a choked moan, and a sobbing; and then he heard Granny's soft deep old voice saying, "There, there, acushla! Whisht now, I'm telling you! Sure why would he be drownd-ed, or even have himself kilt! It's coming back to us he'll be, as proud as Punch after being off with himself and not one of us with him. You'll find him there, as sound as a trout, when you go back to your own place . . . and if it's a thing that Herself is gone . . . fell into the canal or a thing of the soart, why, may the Lord have mercy on her soul; but . . ."

"I tell you, Granny, it's my belief it's kilt he is! The way she was going on, having him annoyed . . . sure what about her, if she's in the canal let her stop there . . . But Dinny! the innocent little *gaum*. and the biddablest little thing . . .! And getting really wise—could count up to twenty and it would

delight ye, to hear him at his Catechism ; me and Tim that kept him at that . . . And to say he'll not get Confirmation . . . and he just ready for it ! . . . And now he to be dead ' on ' us ! ”

“ Sure, Brigeen ! ” said Dinny, pushing open the door and running in ; “ let you not be fretting ! I'm not dead at all, at all ! can't you see . . . ”

“ God be praised ! what am I after telling to you ! ” said Granny, while Brigit stared at Dinny, as if he had been his own ghost, so certain was she that something terrible had befallen him.

She ought then and there to have fainted for joy ; or at least to have burst into fresh tears, and taken him in her arms.

Not a bit of it.

“ You young limb ! ” was all she said.

To be sure there was a choke in her voice, and she had to hurry up and rub her eyes dry. But Dinny understood. He felt the little shake she gave him to be a kind of caress, it was so gently done ; and then he locked his thin arms round her neck and said : “ Were you very lonesome for me last night, Brigeen ? ”

“ Och, God help you ! Lonesome indeed ! ” said Granny ; “ what time had we to be lonesome, only the two of us hunting about half the night, and lying awake the rest of it ”

“ Where at all were you ? ” demanded the practical Brigit.

So Dinny told his adventures, while his dream of being warmed and fed by Granny's fire was coming true.

“ Pull't by the po-lis ! and divil's cure to her ! ” commented Bride ; “ and that they may give her six months . . . ! ”

"They'll not do that, nor couldn't," said Granny, "though I seen a poor boy getting more for stealing a couple or three turnips out of a big field full of them, in the County Clare; and he just a poor travelling tinker . . ."

"Well, I'll have to be getting off," said Brigit; "I can lose no more time . . . You're late now at Byrne's!" she added to Dinny, menacingly.

"Will he not be wanting me no more after this?" said the unaspiring Dinny, hopefully.

"In troth you deserve to lose the job, and would, too, only for I going round in your place with the papers."

"Did he say where was I?" asked Dinny.

"Didn't I tell him you had the teeth-aches!" said Brigit, whisking out of the door with an air of satisfaction.

Dinny drew a breath of relief. Here was a sister to depend on! though if she'd have let it be . . . But, still . . .! And Granny after saying the two of them were to stop with her, as long as they'd be let.

CHAPTER VII

DINNY UPON ANOTHER DOORSTEP

WHILE these things were proceeding in Granny's cellar, Jack was pacing round and round the lawns and gardens comprised in the Square, with Ruth, whom he had persuaded to join him there for an airing. Her father's illness was lengthening itself out ; there would be a rally now and then, but no permanent steps towards recovery. Ruth was always in close attendance now.

" It takes a long time always, doesn't it, Jack—an illness like his ? "

" Oh, rather ! Always tedious," he replied ; and lest Ruth's questioning should become embarrassing, he went on, " Ripping place this is ! good old Square ! Remember the first time we played tennis here ? I was horribly funky . . . " he stopped, and looked anxious, as Ruth, instead of replying, walked on in silence. Jack glanced at her, and saw that her mouth was curving sorrowfully downward.

After a bit, " Yes," she said, " these gardens are beautiful ! I love them. I think the sky and clouds are always kind here ! Just look at that ! " and she pointed towards the west.

It had been raining all day, as Granny would have said, kind and constant. Now, overhead, the magnificent murk was dispersing, blown aside like a huge

curtain by a thin, moist wind. A pale-green, watery expanse of sky was thus disclosed. Here and there, little clouds were drifting across it, just touched to a rosy glow by the soft light cast upon them from the setting sun, itself already invisible.

"Pretty smooth, isn't it? After all, good old Dublin's not so much amiss; 'place like this takes a lot of beating!"

"I suppose so," said Ruth, slowly; "still . . . Do you know, as long as I remember this Square, I hated the railings! There they are, strong and high; keeping out everyone, except just ourselves, that really don't need the air and space and beauty, half as much as the poor things living up the courts and alleys, not so far away! And to see the children! little grimy pale-faced creatures, swarming along outside . . . see them there this minute . . .! Why, its Bride . . . and Dinny, and . . . how many more has she?"

"Two babies in that box on wheels; probably twins," said Jack, "and two more and Dinny . . now she's hoisting them up to look through the railings . and however she got across the street with her little lot . . .!"

"I must just go and speak to them . . . I haven't seen them for ages . . . well, Brigit, how are you all, and what brings you here this evening?"

"We're well, I'm thankful to ye, Miss," said Bride, in the small, frightened voice reserved for the Quality; while with deprecating glance at Jack she began hurriedly replacing the babies in the strange vehicle which had conveyed them thither, and made as if she would have retreated.

"Are you going off already?" said Ruth; "tell me, who are these other children?"

"Belongin' to a widdah woman that lodges in our place, Miss," replied Bride; "and she was in a decline these six months, and was got into a . . . a place they do have for them . . ."

"And what's to become of the children?"

"They're to be took off to the Union, Miss," said Bride; "and so me and Dinny was bringin' them here, the way they'd see the Square; they never were this len'th before . . ."

"Better bring them home," said Jack, "before its dark; here . . .," and he passed something through the railings into Bride's ready hand; "buy yourselves a few cakes . . .," and as Brigit began uttering voluble thanks, he hastily retired, followed by Ruth, who said, "If I had done that . . .! What price the encouragement of beggary now?"

"Doesn't count here," returned Jack; "Brigit and Dinny are case-hardened; beyond spoiling; and the others . . .! Their mother was impossible! refused to leave them till now, and it's too late; might have been saved if she'd have agreed to get treatment sooner . . . oh, yes. I knew all about her. Worst of it is, the poor kiddies can hardly escape; they lived in a room with three or four other lodgers; slept in the bed with their mother . . . if they'd been well nourished, and had had plenty of air, they might have had a chance. As it is . . ."

"It's all horrible!" said Ruth; "and to think of them, shut out of this place, that they might have been reared in, almost . . . with the trees and the grass and the lovely, living air, instead of those hateful,

smelly places they have. . . . And so few people as ever seem to make use of this Square ! Why, I don't come here, not once in a blue moon, and father . . . I don't suppose he has set foot inside these railings half a dozen times . . . And those poor things on the other side . . ."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" demanded Jack as he often had before. It wasn't that he was unfeeling. But he hadn't come to meet Ruth there just to talk about slum-children.

For the matter of that, neither had Ruth.

"Jack," she said as they paced slowly along by the soft velvet-smooth-shaven lawn, "you just said something about the first time here . . . do you know this must be the last time . . ."

"Why? What do you mean? Do you suppose your not enjoying this place will do anything towards letting loose the poor little nippers you're always worrying over, in here?"

"No, I wasn't thinking that. But . . . I may as well say it out at once. Father . . . now you know Jack how good and . . . and fond of me he is . . ."

"I'm not blaming him for that. And besides he's been kind and helpful to . . . to so many. . . ."

Jack made a mental reservation on account of that evening that Ruth had been snatched away from him by her father. But he said nothing. He felt something was very wrong. Ruth looked so grave; as if her lips and laughter had parted company for ever.

"Listen, now, Jack; this is the end. We mustn't see one another again. This is the last time for us to be together"

"What!" shouted Jack! and then he laughed "oh yes; not till the next time. . . ."

"There won't be any next time," said Ruth in a low, steady voice.

"What are you talking such . . . such rot for?" he demanded, trying to laugh still.

"Ah, don't you make it harder for me You see, Jack it's like this. . . . Father's been talking this long time about . . . about foolish engagements . . . and the difficulty of getting on . . . and only yesterday he got ever so excited . . . and you see I've been warned never to contradict him. He simply goes wild if you do . . . And so . . . and so . . . I've promised. . . ."

"Promised what . . . ?"

"Promised not to see you again . . . and so" Ruth ended miserably on something like a sob.

"Ruth! But you had promised me before!"

"I know that! I know that well! Oh, I really do want to do right . . . and now it seems so hard. . . . Jack, listen . . . once when I was a child I was told that if two paths lay before me I should take the one I liked least. . . ."

"That's all wrong," said Jack.

But it comforted him a bit to hear what Ruth proposed doing was what she liked least. Of course he knew that before, but it was nice to hear it affirmed.

"Why should we refuse happiness?" said Jack; "it wouldn't be there if we weren't meant to enjoy it. . . . Ruth, give me your hand in mine, and look me straight in the eyes and tell me what you really mean by all this!"

They were sitting in a retired nook of the gardens.

It was growing dusk. The lovely many-coloured evening skies had faded to a cold grey.

"I do really mean what I said! We must just say good-bye, here and now. And then we must only see one another in the ordinary way, and . . ."

"That's nonsense!" said Jack rudely.

"Jack, you won't understand! If you saw him only once . . . so worn and changed and suffering, you'd just tell me yourself to do anything he wanted."

"I would not!" said Jack; and then he added coldly, "but it's for you to decide. . . ."

But it was all he could do to speak at all. And Ruth guessed this, and contrived somehow to induce him to talk on another subject that he had intended should be under discussion between them that evening. He had been offered a post as travelling companion to a young fellow in bad health who needed looking after. The terms, according to Jack's modest views were princely; everything was to be of the best. There were only nominal duties. The prime object was to travel far and have a good time.

"I thought myself on the Pig's Back, when I heard of it this morning," said Jack in his simple way, "but now I don't care a tinker's curse about the bally thing. . . .!"

"Don't refuse it," said Ruth, "it will be better for you to go . . ."

"You want me out of the way, then?" said Jack; "you never seem to realise what it will be for me . . . the loneliness, away for two years . . . not seeing a face I know"

Ruth never winced, nor reminded him she too might have a hard time.

"Go to please me," she said; "it's just a chance you mustn't miss. . . I must go back to father now . . . Good-bye, Jack . . ."

She kissed him very simply. Jack went off, head down, hot and wretched

"Oh, he never once even looked round!" Ruth mourned to herself, inconsistently, and cried then as she made her way back to the big, wealthy, sorrow-stricken house where the kind father, who was such a tyrant too, lay dying. Ruth did not yet realise this.

So Jack was gone. For Ruth there remained the old routine, watching and waiting and with no heart for any of the old ways.

"Had she done right? If only . . . But then . . ."

These doubts! What a treasure is the nature that is always sure it has done right. But Ruth wasn't built that way. She had to put up with herself, and live through many black hours.

It may have been cowardly, but she gave up her work at the tenement houses. She didn't want to see a new secretary in Jack's place. Besides her father grew every day more exacting and needed more of her time and care. Thus she lost sight of her friends, Granny and the young Dorans and Tim. She knew nothing of the halcyon days spent by the children in the cellar, while Herself was expiating that drunken wrongdoing of hers, as by law decreed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCHOOL DOORSTEP

BUT that peaceful time had to end. The young Dorans went back, very unwillingly, to Herself. Things there were really much as before, but they seemed worse after the comfort Granny had contrived to diffuse for them in her cellar. Dinny's vigils near the railway ceased, but that was only because the place was being so closely watched by the Children's Society. He and Brigit had to exert themselves still, begging about the streets at night ; and their takings went in the old channel.

School wasn't so bad for Dinny. He had rather a good name there. In point of fact, he was too weakly and timid not to be submissive ; a condition that, however undesirable, does make for peace. Supposing for instance, you can't say your lesson ; let you not say anything else (an easy matter for Dinny who seldom had anything he particularly wanted to say) and things will go fairly well with you.

But other troubles had Dinny. Two terrors he had to face at Mr. Byrne's. He might make mistakes about where to leave the papers ; and he mightn't be back from his rounds in time for school, and get into trouble there. Bride used to sort the papers for him, and point out signs and tokens whereby Dinny might distinguish them from one another. He tried his best to understand her half-impatient directions,

but his callow wits were easily perturbed. He knew most of his letters, but that was little use in deciphering the strange unknown characters in which the titles of the papers were printed. If only he had known something of the politics they stood for, it would have been simple enough for him to remember that the important stiff Conservative papers generally went to the important and stately many-roomed mansions around the Square, while the "rabid rags" of the Nationalist type would flutter away into shabby side-streets The weeklies were easier to tell one from another. But the weight of them—for young and ill-fed arms! Dinny's often ached all Saturday, after he would have toiled along at a sweep's trot, bearing pictured news of the week, anxious, unhappy young Mercury that he was.

And despite all he could do, Dinny was constantly losing time. He would be late for school. Worse itself, complaints began to come in to his employer that the delivery of the papers was being delayed beyond endurance; and of course there is danger of the world and its work coming to an end if we don't get the latest news thereof at the earliest possible moment.

Dinny shook with cold fright when Mr. Byrne asked him what he meant by this kind of going-on, and to let him hear no more about it, or . . . Dinny tried harder than ever to do better the following morning; with the result that there were more mistakes, and more complaints.

Then it was that Mr. Byrne, a choleric little man, and one of his own making, too, declared that he'd stand no more nonsense, to please either Dinny or the young lady from the Square. Of course this last was

a bit of bluff, for why would he fall out with one of his best customers ! But he was quite convinced that Dinny could do the rounds of a morning, ready, if only he chose to mind what he was about. He'd go with Dinny himself, and find out where the young shaver was miching

This plan he carried out, being a person of determination, and energy, mind and body ; attributes that, as he often reflected with complacency, had landed him at his present giddy elevation in the corner-shop. And he didn't see why he was to suffer business losses through a young lad like Dinny.

Accordingly the next morning, the affrighted Dinny, clutching his bundle of papers, found himself being seized by the shoulder of Miss Ruth's Christmas coat and rushed along at lightning speed. Long streets that to him had always appeared interminable were devoured now as in a moment of time ; consumed by the raging speed of his master's furious course. Doors opened to Mr. Byrne's brisk ring, with a celerity very different from the tardy response that Dinny's timid appeal would call forth. On, on was he borne by that zealous trader ; with the glorious result that Dinny, breathless and bewildered, found himself back at his starting-point, still in the same grasp, and three minutes and a half to spare.

" There ! " said Mr. Byrne, triumphantly, " now you see ! Sure don't I know the differ, well, that was running messages since I was able to stand ! Let you be losing no more time, only be off about your business, and not be late for school ! I've shown you what can be done if only a body chooses to look slippy, and not be going about as if they were half asleep."

Half asleep ! It's whole asleep Dinny ought to have been then, instead of hurrying along the deserted uncanny, early streets, bearing the morning news to our important notice.

So here is the nett result of Miss Ruth's well-meant efforts on Dinny's behalf : in addition to a long day in school, he had as a preparation thereto the strenuous morning race we have described. The pay therefor was miserable, not that that mattered to Dinny ; he never got a penny of it.

I declare it's amazing the stupid want of common-sense in our dealings with what we are pleased to term " the lower orders." We need their strength, to do work for us that we either can't or won't do for ourselves. And what chance have the Tims and Brides and Dinnys and Pats, of laying up vigour for their after life of labour ? A foal or calf, or pup gets the food and treatment best adapted to fit it in later life to our lordly requirements. What was being done for the young Dorans ? Why, even the leisure that their young hearts needed, for recreation (not amusement, of course !), to make good the loss of energy demanded by school, even this was being filched from them ; in the way of kindness, too.

For Bride, things were not so bad. She was fairly well able to step up to her collar. But you remember, she had had her mother, for her first years. Dinny hadn't ; and it seems that even the most approved methods of dealing with young children somehow can't make up for this want. But there was no redress. Dinny had no one to interfere and put down a firm foot against the philanthropy being exerted on his behalf. His step-mother wouldn't and Granny couldn't inter-

fere ; and what could Brigit do, even if she had realised the position ? Why, she might get into trouble herself, either at the shop or with Miss Ruth, who never seemed to understand, Brigeen thought ! But anyway, the children hadn't seen their young lady for some time.

Besides all this, Dinny was like many another child who is being unjustly treated. He never dreamt of rebelling. He thought he was to blame for not getting round more quickly ; for not waking at Brigit's first summons ; for, in short, being the failure he felt himself to be. All he could do was to struggle along against the inevitable.

It chanced once that standing on the doorstep of the big house in the Square, of which mention has so often been made, he turned faint. It may have been a whiff of breakfast bacon that was too much for the endurance of a craving young stomach. Anyway, when the maid, who took in the morning papers, opened the door for that purpose, she was struck by the child's wan looks. She took Dinny by the hand and led him only half conscious of what was being done, to the kitchen.

It was warm and bright. It shone with comfort and cleanliness. " God help us, but he's cold and perished-looking ! " said the portly cook.

" Sure I think it's what that should be the little chap Miss Ruth gave the tea to one day in the garden, himself and the sister and their Granny . . . "

" Well, to be sure ; so it is ! Here now, sit over to the fire and drink this sup of hot tea, and eat a bit with it . . . "

And Dinny found himself planted in front of a

roaring fire with the tea aforesaid, and share from the sizzling pan. He drank a little of the tea and revived.

"I'm thankful to you, Mam," he said, and stood up to go.

"Sure, where's your hurry? Let you wait and eat your bit . . ."

"I'm thankful to you, Mam," said Dinny, sidling to the door; "I wouldn't wish to be troublesome . . ."

"What at all! what trouble!"

"I'm thankful . . . I must be goan, for 'fraid of being late . . ."

"You're not fit to go out of this for a while anyway . . ."

"The sorra ha'porth is on me, at all at all!" said Dinny, with a valiant effort to look all right.

"You'll not stir out of this, the sorra bit, till you have that plateful of meat ett!" said the cook, waddling between Dinny and the door, with her fat arms akimbo. 'Like most of us, she wanted to do him good her own way.

Dinny was in despair. He felt trapped. How was he to make her understand that he must go! And every minute that he was delayed meant so much to him!

"Miss Ruth that would be put about if she seen how bet-up-looking that child is!" said another maid who was standing by; "and only for she being so took up with the poor Doctor, I'd be inclined to let her know . . . But the nurses have very poor news of him this morning . . ."

"God help her! she that's made upon him, and he the same by her!"

"At all events," said the butler, the "big fellah of a

sarvint " on the occasion of that dinner whereat Dinny had conducted himself with such lamentable lack of dignity, " anyway, what about the boy ? " and he opened the paper and glanced at the latest racing intelligence with lordly air, before adding, " isn't he only doing work that many a one would be proud to have, running round with the papers, instead of idling at street corners—isn't a job like that able to make a man of him ? "

A " man of him ! Why, why are the pastors and masters of youth so desirous of bringing about this change ? "

" Let him go now, at anyhow," he added, with masculine finality ; " there's no sense in keeping people against their will, and maybe losing their job ' on ' them, into the bargain ! "

" In the name of God, then, let you be off, child ! " said the Cook ; " here, take this with you and be eating it and you going along . . . "

And she thrust some savoury slices, hastily wrapped in paper, into Dinny's pocket, and thus fortified he sped forth again, consumed with anxiety . . .

Very early in life do the Dinnys learn to " be in dread."

One morning, Dinny actually woke of himself, without the usual shake and call from Brigit. And before he had well rubbed his eyes open, there was the big bell of the Chapel close by booming out . . .

Eight o'clock ! It couldn't surely be that hour !

" Och ! I'm late ! " thought Dinny to himself ; and his heart positively shrank together as he realised the fact ; " whatever at all happened Brigeen that she never called me. . . . ! "

And it *was* long past his usual hour. At first he

tried to think, maybe the bell had gone astray ; sure it couldn't be so late . . . ! but then he saw that the young journeyman baker with the bad cough was asleep already. He shared a bed behind the door with another man that had to be off to work early of a morning ; whereas the baker had to be up at night (to ensure fresh rolls for the Square breakfast tables), and slept through most of the day. He was a bit particular, it was considered, and always waited to let the bed cool after the other man had left it, before taking possession himself. So it would be fairly late before he'd get to sleep ; and there he was now, breathing hard and quick.

No, the clock wasn't making any mistake. . . . Dinny scrambled out of his sleeping-place ; and if some troubled vision of Brigit the Beloved having gone off wid herself to America, annonst-lek, did cross his mind, it was soon dismissed. Brigeen would never do that ! Besides he was very soon brought back to more pressing difficulties by the way Herself was banging things about and goan on generally. Dinny could pretty well guess what was up. She had had an extra " sup " the night before ; a circumstance that is apt to result in a very bad pain in a body's temper the day following. Dinny was frightened as he timidly watched her sullen looks and the aimless, spiteful movements she was making about the miserable room. She was, in fact, just spoiling for a fight. Some vent she had to find for her vindictive mood. The defencelsss Dinny would afford that.

It is observable that in such cases, naturally, perhaps, the weakest thing to hand is always selected ; also that the scriptural soft answer does not always

turn away wrath. Doubtless in the long run Solomon is right ; yet at the time meekness seems only to add fuel to flame such as that of Mrs. Doran's unreasoning wrath ; and how was Dinny to take comfort by looking ahead ? He was living in the supreme moment of the present peril ; with no trusty Brigeen to stand between him and wrath to come. He longed for the protection of her sharp wits and growing strength. He felt without knowing why, that their step-mother was more than half afraid of Brigeen. But no young defender was there now. He had to bear the storm alone. The thought of what it might mean, did he attract it towards himself, cowed his very soul. But he was between two fires. He must get off to school.

So, watching an opportunity when Herself was standing at the window, staring moodily forth in a way that offered a chance of escaping notice, Dinny crept cautiously over to a corner, where, on a broken chair, there was a tin basin half full of greasy water. This uninviting object betokened a rare but commendable effort after seemliness on Brigit's part. She had actually washed-up the evening before ; a reflection from the better order of things faintly felt even here as a result of the efforts of the Guild.

Of course Brigit should have washed-up always, after every meal. And even if that were not feasible, why, in Heaven's name, having gone about the work, why had she not done it properly, and got rid at once of that foul water ?

Why, indeed ?

Well, perhaps those who read about young Bride and blame her for not doing those things which, etc.,

even they might not do so much better themselves, were they in Brigit's circumstances.

Consider only how that water was obtained. You had to go for it, down three long flights of stairs ; dilapidated stairs at that, where it behoved you to look well to the ways of your feet, or you might slip, ready, and land at the bottom, on your head, in a standin' lepp. And the only thing you'd have to carry the water in was either an ancient, much battered kettle or the basin itself ; which indeed you had to bring anyway, to empty it ; for it wasn't always safe to slash the contents out o' window. Thus, when Brigit would have toiled up those interminable stairs with that water, it was almost as precious because of these difficulties as if she were in the Sahara, instead of beneath grey and weeping Irish skies. Small blame to the thrift of labour that makes such hardly-won liquid contrive a double debt to pay ; as of course the basin did too ; it being the sole medium for the personal as well as the household ablutions of the Doran ménage.

Dinny then sidled over softly towards the tin basin with the laudable purpose of giving his face and hands a rinse before presenting himself for the inspection of that august being, the school-mistress. They expected you to be middling particular at the Shop, too ; but that didn't count now, Dinny reflected. What would happen, he didn't know ; but he felt some satisfaction as he thought, they wouldn't be apt to believe Brigeen a second time about the teethaches. He'd get " the boot " out of Mr. Byrne's. The prospect was not displeasing to him.

But what had happened to Brigit ?

He was thinking over this, and had just dipped one finger into the untempting basin, when his step-mother turned back from the window and saw him. He wished then that he had stopped in bed and let on to be asleep. But it was too late for that now.

"What at all has you here for ever under a body's feet!" his step-mother shrieked at him; "be off wid you, before I lose me timper altogether! And me heartscalded, so I am, without a penny to my name, for rent or anything else! and sweet bad luck to them that harished me out of the little place I had, where I was known and had friends. . . with their interfering and nonsense . . . God knows, the poor gets it tight enough to live, and let them do their best! Knocked about I am this day and dissolat and distracted with the annoyance I do be getting from everyone! And now, along with that and everything else, to say Brigit should be after getting the sack out of Byrne's, and you as well; you'll be goan round with no papers now of a morning for Byrne's; and the likes of them won't be able to keep open at all, with this new regulation of a law saying how that lads like Tim Carty won't be let to smoke a cigarette; so there! Sure it's a fright, so it is, the way they do be getting on making their laws, and never so much as an iday of how the poor is to live! No employment for gerruls or boys! nothing only starvation for the whole of us! And me with two children and them not my own, left for me to rear! The Lord look down on me, I pray; for if He doesn't there's no one else, God help us! What's the world coming to at all at all, between making you scour out your little places as if you had nothing better to do than that and

having to send the children all to school! Wirra, wirra, what's to be done at all!"

With that she let herself drop on to a stool which, being crazy, gave way with her and let her slip to the floor. There she lay, with her apron over her head, crying and bemoaning herself very loudly.

Dinny was relieved at the turn affairs had taken. He perceived that no reply to Mrs. Doran's plainings was being expected from him. His spirits began to rise. It was altogether to the good for him that she was so completely overcome with grief for herself. He rather doubted if she would be able to get on her feet without help from a stronger hand than his.

And to think! only to think of not having to go round with the papers!

Encouraged by these considerations he plucked up heart to steal over to a table on three legs, which was balancing itself against the wall, but in such a place that he could approach it without having to go near his step-mother. She lay close to the basin; Dinny judged it best to let sleeping dogs lie. He would postpone his ablutions rather than risk rousing her anger against himself again. His face and hands he thought would do; anyway he would rather chance that.

On the table there lay a small piece of bread. He would "sneak" that, and run off with it. It was indeed but a hard little bit of a stale loaf, at which only the evening before he had turned up his bit of a nose disdainfully. But there had chanced then to be a feast of fat things. The young baker had produced a lot of rolls; another lodger had unexpectedly contributed fresh butter. Your Dorans and their congeners are often guilty of extravagant outbreaks

condemned as such by interested on-lookers who

“ have their regular meals.”

But we all want a purple patch now and then. Dinny recalled his share of those festivities, with much satisfaction. None the less, he was glad enough to snatch up the despised crust and make a bolt with it, down the rickety, filthy stairs and out upon the doorstep. There he disposed of it in double quick time. Indeed he could have got away with twice as much, without inconvenience.

But there was no use in fretting about things he could not alter. He finished the bread to its last crumb with immense relish, and washed it down with water from a neighbouring horse-trough.

“ It’s a great thing to me, that I’m able to reach the cup now, without some one having to give me a hoise up ! ” he thought ; and trotted away towards school, with the devious uncertainty of the young scholar.

As he was thus going along, he heard a loud “ Hallo ! ” accompanied by a friendly bat on the side of the head. It staggered him a bit . . . Dinny was easily bowled over at any time ; but when he saw it was Tim Carty who was thus greeting him, he only laughed his timid laugh that was almost melancholy, it was so slow to come and so deprecating.

“ Goan to school, are ye, Dinny ? ” said the great Carty ; “ and where have you your books, man alive ? ”

“ I’m damned, Tim,” says Dinny, “ but it’s what I’m after forgetting them in anundher the bed, where I do have to shove them betimes, for ’fraid Herself would go and pop them on me ! ”

Dinny used that swear-word with the idea of impressing his audience of one, with a sense of his manliness. He felt more backboneless than usual that morning, without Bride. As for the word itself, he had about as much notion of its meaning as . . . well, what does it mean, anyway? And Dinny had just learned it, and many a worse word from what he heard being used every day as ornamental adjuncts to conversation.

"What will you do?" said Tim; "for if you haven't them, won't the Mistress leather you; and if you go back for them won't you be late?"

"You do get bet for that, too; and sure Herself is as apt as not to half murther me . . . very wicked in herself she is this morning"

"It could be that there'd be no remarks passed this morning, once you're in class, whether you have them or not," said Tim encouragingly.

Dinny thought he would rather take this risk than face his step-mother again. He went on to school.

However, he wasn't to escape as he hoped. Of course the teacher missed the books; and of course punishment had to follow.

"Hold out your hand, Doran," she said; "yes, and now I see you haven't washed them this morning; no, nor your face either. That's two slaps you've earned!"

Dinny received the stinging cuts on his small palm with all the stoicism he could muster.

"Now you'll not forget books another time," she said, "nor to come with clean face and hands . . ."

She didn't speak harshly; she was fond of her children, but just it came in the day's work to impress

a delinquent with the reason why. Of course that was what she was there for ; to enforce rules often extremely irksome, not to say stupid ; she hadn't made them. Often enough she had to be more severe than she liked, if she could have had her own way ; but there . . . ! And maybe she was right, and that Dinny, having been punished would not have transgressed again, only that . . .

However, what way had she, any more than Dinny of knowing what was going to happen ?

The writing-lesson came early in the proceedings that morning, and Dinny's hand was less use to him than usual, after the "pandying" he had had. He did as well as he could, but the letters were worse than ever. The teacher saw all this, but she made allowances. So Dinny battled along pretty well, till a bit later, when the arithmetic lesson began.

By this time the school-room had grown very hot and airless. It was overcrowded and the ventilating arrangements were of the usual kind. Some of the children were red in the face ; others had grown very pale. Dinny belonged to the latter description. He had always been what Granny designated a "very simple-coloured child." He felt weak and giddy. Small blame to him, working a not over-strong brain on an empty stomach.

The multiplication table was in progress. They were being heard "up and down"—a final torture to the tired scholars.

"Four times seven?" the teacher demanded, looking at Dinny.

"Fifty-one," he answered faintly.

" Fifty-one ? What rubbish is that ? You ought to be ashamed of yourself ! Fifty-one ! There's no such number in the whole . . . Not know four times ! Why the infants are better than that. Four times seven ? Answer me, some of you. Who can tell me how much four times seven is ? "

A thin hand went up close to Dinny.

" Twenty-eight ! " said the owner of it.

" Right ! Now, say it after him, Doran," said the teacher, trying to give Dinny another chance. She didn't want to punish him again, if it could be helped ; so she repeated once more, " Four times seven are twenty-eight . . . now say it and . . . let me hear you clearly . . . four . . . "

But no word came from Dinny ; he sat silent, apparently stubborn, staring vacantly at the desk in front of him. He did not understand at all what was being said to him. The voice of the teacher sounded queer and thin as if it was coming from a long way off. He could hear the sound, but it conveyed no meaning to his mind, dulled by want of food and of fresh air.

" Why can't you even say it after me, when you're told ! " said the teacher, giving him a little shake to arouse his attention. You can't blame her for that.

" Och, sure, where's the use ! " murmured Dinny slowly. And he might well ask that ! What earthly use was it, or could it be to him to repeat that formula. It conveyed no smallest idea to him.

" What's the use," indeed of " the weight " of the learning imparted with such immense cost and labour to young children ; cost, besides State and other expenditure, that includes so many weary hours of

imprisoned childhood ; hours that ought to be spent in freedom for mind and body.

But ideals in education are a long way ahead still.

Dinny, having made the feeble protest just recorded against the order of things under which he was suffering, began swaying queerly in his seat. The teacher, perceiving this and guessing that he was about to faint, took him by the arm and half carried him outside, where she placed him sitting on the doorstep.

"He'll come to better in the air," she thought, having indeed had similar experiences pretty often before ; "when they go off in class, it's much worse, for the others as well as for me ! But God help him ! how thin and cold he was ! If I can manage it, I'll try and bring him home with me and give him a bit . . ."

She had often done this before, and shared her own careful dinner, in her neat house over the way, with some starving little learner. But this had to be managed cautiously, so as to avoid jealousy. She knew that often, when work was scarce, some twenty-five per cent. of the children came to that school without having broken their fast. You have to steel your heart to these things if you want to keep sane.

Hunger, and foul surroundings ; and the infants that were born to these things were being taught the Lord's Prayer . . . it takes them three months to learn it . . . and they were rendering the first petition : "Our Father which worketh in Heaven . . ." which interpretation may be part of the wisdom that proceeds from the mouths of babes and sucklings.

Well, the teacher shut the door on Dinny, and went back to her class, which was getting a bit out of hand already ; they were all exhausted, more or less. This

always happens at the end of the morning's work in school. The teacher knew this, and as a rule took the difficult subjects first, when minds and bodies were at their freshest. She had arrived, through her own power of sympathy, at the conclusions reached by means of scientific experiments recently conducted. These show that children do more and better work during the first hour in school than during the third ; let alone the fourth or fifth. How can tired young beings that ought to be using any energy they have in growing, continue assimilating knowledge . . . or let us say facts for the most part uninteresting and incomprehensible to them, for so many of their waking hours ! Let any of the Powers that arrange matters Educational . . . any of ourselves . . . try to learn new and difficult things under similar circumstances . . . making such a long-sustained effort while hunger and weakness are gnawing at one's vitality, and mark the result.

Dinny knew nothing about these things, I mean the injustice of them, which perhaps is just as well. He crouched there, and after a while the air did revive him. The sun was shining pleasantly, and by-and-by he was able to get on his feet and creep slowly away. So he never knew of the teacher's good intentions towards him ; it was her last chance, too.

Dinny was very glad to be out of the school-room that had been so full of a queer buzzing, and where the teacher had suddenly towered up into a giantess, just before she had led him outside. He had felt frightened at it all ; now he was better and the roaring in his ears had stopped.

But what was he to do, where was he to go ? Not

home, certainly. His step-mother would smell a rat, if he made his appearance at that unwonted hour. And thus she would have an excuse for being mad wid him again. He thought he'd take no more chances, till such time as Brigeen might be there.

If only he knew where she was ! But how could he find that out ? His step-mother had said, she had lost her job at Byrne's. That might be true or it might not. But one thing was clear. Dinny wouldn't trust himself within shouts of that place of terror, the Shop, even to get back to the protection of Brigit's wing.

All he could do was to move slowly along, nursing his smarting hand, and trying to pretend to himself he wasn't afraid of being alone in an unknown street. Until now he had never been adventurous enough to explore in that direction beyond the well-known way that led him to school ; unless with Brigit's hand or Tim's leadership to sustain his courage. Now he was at loose ends, and could think of nothing better to do than just to wander on, aimless and lonesome.

Presently he found himself emerging upon a broad and busy thoroughfare, Sackville Street, at Nelson Pillar. It was crowded. There seemed to Dinny to be no end of carts and carriages passing to and fro ; often with a beautifully serene disregard of the ordinary rules that govern traffic. And thus is produced a deceptive air of wonderful stress of business.

Plenty of foot-passengers there were, too ; people of all sorts and conditions ; young and old, rich and poor ; busy and idle. None of them appeared to see Dinny. He felt very small, very tired, very hungry too there among all those strange folk.

Suddenly his heart rose with a bound.

Half-way across that wide street, there are stalls where all day women and girls stand, selling fruit and flowers. The fragrant loveliness of the blooms, the luscious beauty of the tropical fruits displayed contrast startlingly with the sordid surroundings amid which they are set out for sale. But Dinny saw nothing of all this. For he had caught sight amid the throng at these stalls of the familiar Paisley shawl, draped across the comfortable fat back of Granny Molally, and who was talking to her there, only Brigeen herself !

Yes, indeed, there was young Bride, looking excited and happy ; quite grown-up Dinny thought with pride ; the black cab drawn tightly around her and a basket on her arm. What was in that basket ? What had brought Brigeen there ?

All eagerness and delight at the prospect of getting back to the protection he craved, Dinny made a wild plunge into the street ; pulled himself up with a terrified jerk halfway across with sudden conviction that he was running straight into the ken of that same po-lisman of his cattle-market adventure ; realised that the majesty of the law had turned a contemplative eye the other way ; and encouraged by such neglect from the guardian of the public safety, this small member of the British Empire fled onward, ducking under elbows here, making a frantic rush there through the press, till he got to where Bride was standing.

" Brigeen ! " he panted out, pulling at the corner of the well-known cab, " Brigeen, what at all has you here ! And me that never knewn one bit of you,

the first go-off ! I couldn't think it to be you, when I seen no hat upon you, that Miss Ruth gave you, I mean . . . why aren't you wearing it . . ."

"An' is it to have all the other flower-gerruls laughing at me, and them in their bare heads ; what foolish talk is that to be having out of you—you should have more sense. . . ."

But Brigit said this with a soft intonation that took the sting out of the words. But however she spoke, Dinny's happiness, his perfect contentment in being with her would have been unimpaired.

"Sure, how was I to know the differ !" he said, snuggling up as close as he could to Bride.

He didn't even want Granny, now slowly disappearing down the street, for he had hold of Brigeen again.

"An' is it that you're selling flowers now ? Are you done with Byrnes' in earnest ?"

"I am. Was it Herself told you that ? So that's why I'm here striving to knock out a few coppers . . . But what brings *you* this len'th, you young limb ?" demanded Brigit, who being little used to any form of endearments, would not for worlds let on how glad she was to have Dinny with her ; "what way is it to be goan on that you're not in school this minute ?"

"The mistress that pegged me outside the door because I hadn't me multiplication table off ; and even gave me two slaps as well ; see here !" showing his hand with justifiable pride.

"The ould divel ; but sure I suppose it's what you had them earned !" said Bride, thus tempering with judicial severity her sisterly indignation at the idea of Dinny's getting slapped.

". . . and I wouldn't cry *for* her, either !" Dinny

went on, swelling with satisfaction as he recalled his own fortitude.

But if he thought by this boasting assertion to win praise from Brigeen, he was disappointed. She had always been what Mrs. Molally called "a very manly little girl, well able to box her corner against anyone." So what Dinny related as heroism, she regarded as merely an incident in the day's work and her comment was a crushing one.

"Sure what at all; why would you go cry?" she demanded, with a fine scorn; "how was that goan to sarve you? And along with all, the sarra know I know am I to believe that story at all or not! Maybe it's miching from school you were, all the time! Wait till I get you home, and tell on you!"

"Ah, Brigeen! sure you'd never go do the like of *that* dirty turn on a body!" said little Dinny, looking up trustingly into his sister's eyes. She was suddenly shooting up into girlhood, slender and wiry; pretty, too, only young brothers don't take count of that. But if she had been as ugly as sin, that would have made no difference. Dinny pushed his unpunished hand into hers, with a certain coaxing, nestling action that dated back to his babyhood; and Bride gave it a welcoming squeeze, which made her next words quite harmless.

"You couldn't tell what I'd do, if only I took the notion!" she said; a dark utterance at which Dinny laughed outright; so that there was really little reason for her to add as she did, "Well if I say no more about it, will you strive your living best to help me now?"

"Sure how could I do that?"

"And what's to hinder you! Here, it's vi'lets I'm selling; let you take a copole or three bunches in each

hand . . . there they're for you . . . and run along . . . wait now till we're across to the pavement . . . there now ! Up the street foreinst you let you go, and keep bawling out, ' Fine vi'lets ' . . say it after me, why don't you ! "

Dinny learnt this quickly enough and went off in one direction, Brigit in another, each crying the fragrant wares : " Fine vi'lets ! fresh vi'lets ! a peddy a budch the vi'lets ! " with the plaintive minor interval that Dublin street criers employ so largely.

The side street which was to be the scene of Dinny's maiden effort as flower-vendor was narrow and crowded ; and Dinny, being but a light and small thing at best, was hustled and jostled here and there like a straw on a stream. Now he was shoved against a shop-window, till he thought he would find himself inside among the hats or lamps, or groceries, or cutlery, any and all of which, and many other things were being displayed there ; now he was pushed off the pavement out on to the roadway, perhaps almost under the feet of some passing horse. But he stuck manfully to his job. Wasn't it to help Brigeen ?

And again here his small, pale face with the soft eyes, and his air of weakliness and want attracted first pity ; then kindness ; and finally a certain measure of success. He disposed of his " budches " quickly, ran to Brigit for more, and sold them too.

" Now amn't I helping you ? " he said, gleefully ; " see here, all them pennies . . . " and he handed over his takings to Brigit.

" You're not too bad ! "

" What'll you do with them all ? " enquired Dinny.

Brigit stowed the money safely away, and replied

"Ask and go look!" a time-honoured repartee that Dinny found by no means satisfying. He trotted along beside Brigit for a while; then ventured to speak again.

"Is it keeping it all you'll be, till we go home? I'm middling hungry . . . and I seen the grandest of little cakes in a shop a piece off . . . round they were and sugar on the top . . . and we could be getting cups of coffee for a penny at the stall beyant"

It was fortunate for Dinny that he expected no praise for having abstained from spending any of the pennies off his own bat, for he got none from Brigit the severe.

"What chat is that to be having out of you, and me owing Mrs. Molally there the price of the vi'lets, she that gave me the lend of a half a crown this morning, the way I could be getting some flowers in the market . . . and is it that you're wanting me to not be paying her back, you young robber! There she's on in front of us! Hurry along now till we'll overtake her."

Dinny said no more, but kept up with Brigit's loping vigour as well as he could, seeing the giddiness of his head and the trembling in his legs had got pretty bad by that time. He could scarcely keep moving on. But he did struggle forward till he and Brigit had come up with Mrs. Molally.

"Here's eighteen pence of what I owe you, Granny," said Bride, counting the coppers she and Dinny had amassed from one hand to the other, with much pride.

"You're in a big hurry, about paying it back!" said Granny, "and you done well, to have that much

already ! Didn't I tell you, you might be at worse nor selling flowers, now you're lost the job with Byrnes' . . . ? ”

“ You did so, but it's not me at all, only the little fellah here that done the weight of it all ” and she told what Dinny had done.

“ And so it was my little man, God bless him ! The crathur ; he's looking gashly pale ! Wait ! Here Brigeen, let you hold the basket for me a minute . . . ”

Mrs. Molally's hands being thus disengaged, she drew forth after some fumbling beneath the voluminous shawl, a small black bottle ; extracted the cork with her teeth, and offered it to Dinny, with “ Here, acushla machree ! take a sup of porter ; it will rise your heart ; don't be afraid, there'll be plenty left for me, after ! ”

This was all horribly wrong, no doubt—the action, that is. The motive was unassailable ; as high as that of the Good Samaritan himself, who poured in wine as well as oil.

“ Take enough, now, *ahagur*,” she urged ; and Dinny took a second swallow of the black bitter fluid ; then handed her back the bottle, and said “ That'll do, Granny, and I'm thankful to you. . . . ”

“ See that now ! isn't it putting life into you ! ” said Granny, wiping Dinny's froth-besmeared lips with a corner of the shawl ; “ now h-away with the two of yous and see to get a bit to eat ”

Brigit was off like a shot. She was hungry too, and with all her shrewd premature wisdom, was child enough still to be excited and smiling at the prospect of spending the sixpence that Granny had insisted on her keeping, for cakes.

"Will we be for getting them sugar-tops now, Brigeen?" asked Dinny patiently. The strong drink Granny had given him was mounting into his head. He was pleasantly conscious of warmth and general well-being.

"Let you have done with your laughing now!" said Bride, with would-be sternness, "and gimme your hand, while we go across the street . . ."

Sternly she spoke, but it was very tenderly, with the old motherliness that young Bride stooped down to take Dinny's hand in hers again.

But gently as this was done, it made the child wince, and pull away from Brigit's clasp. For the hand she tried to take was the one that had been pandied. Dinny could not bear to have it touched.

"Have it your own way then," said Brigit, "and sweet bad cess to you and your contrariness!"

You must remember that she too was tired and spent and famished; very excited too over her novel enterprise and its success; a bit irritable in consequence. Without more ado, she darted off herself, out into the traffic that was surging along. It chanced to be pretty congested just then. Dinny felt frightened. What at all was he to do! Granny was out of sight—he was alone on the pavement at the other side. Brigit was waving her hand to him, to come after her! It wouldn't answer to vex her again. He hesitated, only a moment, but that was the moment when he should have gone forward. And perhaps even then he would have remained where he was, only for seeing Brigit disappearing down a side-street. He must overtake her. He made a dash out into the street.

And he might have got across all right only for the

fumes of the sups of porter, and the swimming of his head, and last, not least, the po-lisman. Just as Dinny was reaching the safety-spot upon which that august custodian of law and order had taken his stand, the great man was seizing the bridle of a passing horse and demanding sternly of the driver, "Why didn't you stop, when you seen me with me hand up to regulate the traffic?"

"Sure how was I to know?" thus the driver sought to excuse himself.

"You have no delay only know, when you see me here and I doing nothing, like this, I'm regulating the traffic at that spot . . . you may go for this offer . . ."

And while this was proceeding, other drivers were needing regulating; and Dinny, confused and fearful of being included in the condemnation of the great man, rushed blindly forward; was shouted at to "come back ou'er that"; tried to do so only to be caught by a flying bike and sent spinning under the cart he had just avoided

Whose fault was it? The teacher's, for that aching hand? or Granny's, for the sup of porther? or Bride's? or Herself's, or the po-lisman's? Who can say, since the lives of everyone of us are constructed more or less after the fashion of the house that Jack built, and it is an impossibility to get down to the hard pan of first causes, things hang together so queerly.

But there lay Dinny of the Doorstep, still and silent, fragile and pitiful as a dead bird.

Like magic a crowd collected. Dinny had never been of so much importance before. Everyone was sorry and excited, and giving advice.

"Lift him up, why don't ye!"

"Where's the man that done it—he ought to swing for it!"

"God help us all!—The poor innocent child to be murdered so simple!"

"Well, isn't it the pure fright, to see the like . . .!"

"Stand back, can't yiz! here's the po-lis!"

"Ay, he'll know what to do . . ."

He did. He understood "First Aid," and he was just going off his beat. He lifted Dinny, very carefully, hailed a car, and had the limp little form half-way to hospital before Brigit knew anything of what had happened, she having dived into a shop, expecting Dinny to be at her heels. And the crowd had melted away, and things were going on much as usual, when she came back, a trifle impatient, to see what had him delayed.

"Where at all is that child?" she demanded of Granny, who having got wind of the accident, had hurried back, and was still lingering about. "Sure I was certain he was just behind me; and he after saying how hungry he was! Troth, an arch little lad is the same Dinny!"

"Och, Brigeen, acushla!" said Granny, with the tears beginning to course down her round red cheeks as she spoke. "Don't cry, alanna machree; but isn't he after getting run over—God help us all! Just after you quitting him; kilt entirely he is, the poor *laneen*; a cart that done that destruction on him; and the polis has him took off on a car to the hospital . . ."

Bride grew cold and white; she began to tremble. But indeed she did not believe it; or rather she could

not realise what she had been told, till Mrs. Molally, laying her hand on Brigit's shoulder, said, " But don't take on too much, Brigeen ! sure if it's a thing that he's to die on to God now, why would you wish him back to be tormented ! Won't he be better off, to get shut of hardship and want, and to leave the world and its sin while he's young and innocent . . . ?"

But Bride could not take comfort.

" Ora, why didn't I let him buy his little sugar-tops, that he had his heart set on ! " she said ; and she flung away the bag of cakes she was carrying, and began to cry.

CHAPTER IX

THE OLD DOORSTEP AGAIN

WHEN Dinny, who wasn't killed really, only kilt—a very different thing . . . when Dinny came to himself, and opened eyes that had some intelligence in them again, his first feeling was one of unmixed terror.

Where at all was he, he wondered! What queer sort of a big room was he in, as big nigh-hand as the Chapel itself, to which Dinny went regularly, every Sunday and Saints' Day, with Bride and Granny. This couldn't be the Chapel! It was too bright; and the pickthens on the walls weren't only of Angels, and the Blessed Mother, and the Stations and so forth. Just rows of beds there were, real beds, with quilts and pillows, and people lying in them and it the broad daylight. They couldn't all be like the consumptive baker that had to be up all night and sleep then through the day! Why were they there?—pale they were, but the weight of them looked very contented as if they had escaped into some place of shelter out of a storm. It was all wonderful! The clean walls and floor! the jugs and things all settled out with posies of flowers in them . . he wondered vaguely if any of Brigeen's vi'lets were among them . . The very air across Dinny's face through the open window close to his bed was like no air he had ever breathed before under a roof, that is. But . . . where was Bride?—

where was everything he had ever known ? He could remember nothing, except about the vi'let-selling ; and that he had tried to go after Brigeen . . . everything else was a blank. Where at all was he . . . ?

He wanted to raise himself in the bed, but before he could do more than turn round on that novel luxury, the pillow, there came a swift, soft step beside him, and a gentle hand was laid firmly on his shoulder. And leaning over him, Dinny saw a pale, gentle face, with such kind eyes ! In time, Dinny grew to love that face ; but just then he was only terrified. It was the Sister who was in charge of that ward.

One steady hand now raised Dinny's head ; the other held a glass to his lips.

" Drink this," the Sister said.

Dinny had never had less inclination to swallow anything. But he had learned one thing from his step-mother ; and that lesson was, to do what he was told, without delay or questioning. Herself would stand no back-talk. This habit was to serve Dinny well now. Though disobedience at the hospital was not likely to be followed by the discharge of a boot or lump of coal at your head, the instinct remained, that you'd better do as you were bid. Dinny drank off that draught without venturing even to make a second gulp at it, and in reward was assured that he was a good child, and would soon get well, and let him go to sleep now. And being too weak even to wonder what it was that he had to get well from, Dinny closed his eyes and dropped off into oblivion.

When he woke again, behold ! it was the night. Shaded lights were burning, only just bright enough to let him see that he was still amid those unfamiliar

surroundings. There were the pictures; there lay all the people in the interminable rows of beds; and not a single face or thing that he knew!

Oh, if only he could get out—away to Bride—home! home to Brigeen and the sleeping-place into which the two of them would snuggle at night, together! O, he must get back to Brigeen! She'd be that lonesome!

He looked cautiously round from the level of his pillow. There wasn't a stir in the place. He could hear the breathing of sleepers; now and then a sigh or a moan Who were all these people! How did he come to be there among them . . . ?

He would run out of it! He would creep to the door and get away, anonst! He must get back to Brigeen . . .

He made a feeble attempt to sit up; and in an instant the Sister was beside him again. It was dreadful, to not be able as much as to move an eyelid but you were took notice of!

The Sister stooped down and whispered, "What is it?"

Tears of utter misery ran down Dinny's thin face, and through his parted lips; they tasted salt.

"Don't fret," whispered the soft voice again; "tell me, has the pain come back, or what is it?"

"I . . . I want Brigeen!"

"Who?"

"Brigeen! I want Brigeen! Let me go off to her, and . . . and . . the way I'll not be troublesome to you no more . . ."

"Brigeen! Is she your sister?"

"She is so!"

Dinny looked wildly round, as if he hoped by some chance to catch sight of the familiar face, to give him courage amid these unknown terrors; and failing, quite naturally, to see what wasn't there, "I want Bride! Let me be off ou'er this to Brigeen!"

It was, if only you choose to look at the thing in this way, rather dreadful! Here was a small, defenceless child, in distress, both mind and body. With returning consciousness Dinny was becoming aware of cruel pain; and at the same time his young mind was overwhelmed with loneliness, and fear of the unknown world into which he had awakened. And what was he to do!

All through that short life of his, he had been within easy reach of Church, of school, of laws, specially framed with immense care and learning, for such as he; and in addition all around there were philanthropic efforts in progress too numerous even to glance at; and yet in spite of all these advantages of civilisation, and that everything possible was now being done for him in the Hospital to which he had been carried, Dinny wanted only Bride. There was nothing else, in the heavens above or the earth beneath to which his lonely soul could turn for comfort, but Brigeen; the rough, young lassie, with her defiant ways and ready tongue.

Fortunately the Sister was wise; through long experience among sick folk. So instead of explaining the rules of the place to Dinny, or even telling him he must be good and make no noise for fear of waking the other patients . . . instead of inventing some impossible, easily-seen-through excuse for not at once providing him with the one and only thing his heart

was aching for, she heated a little milk for him to drink, and then laid him down again, carefully covered up, and left him to himself ; just telling him there was a very sick baby in the cot opposite his, who ought not to be disturbed.

So Dinny lay still and took his sufferings silently. In truth he had not strength enough to make much of a fuss. But he ached pretty well all over, and was so bruised and shaken. The worst was, the right foot. The pain there was bad. Dinny made ineffectual efforts to put his hand down, so as to rub it, but always he was afraid of attracting attention and always something came between as if things were wrapped round the foot. It was terrible queer ! and to say the pain went on ! If only he could get to move it ! But he couldn't do that. It was very queer entirely.

The tears were forcing themselves again from Dinny's eyes, when next the Sister came round, after what he thought was a long time. Of course he didn't know what a lot of other tired poor things she had to comfort. And when she did come, what was she to do ? The pain had to be just borne as well as a body could.

The pale Sister often wished she could take even some of it on herself for many of her patients, particularly for children. They are so brave, as a rule, when they are brought into hospital. They know too little to be afraid. And they are so uncomplaining and so gay, generally. So surprised too when they are made suffer ; and how are you to make them understand that it is to do them good ?

The Sister had been through all this, many and many a time ; so she knew there would be no use in telling

Dinny there was no sense in his making a fuss about his right foot, because he hadn't such a thing now, to have a pain in ! For when he had been examined in the Hospital that day after his accident, it had been decided to take off the injured foot at once, as there was no hope of saving it. There had been nothing else to do then ; and now there was nothing to do, except help Dinny to be patient.

And the Sister did this. She didn't talk to him, or say he'd have to be good or anything like that ; only knelt there beside his cot and stroked one small hot hand ; and by degrees Dinny's sobs ceased, and he fell asleep again.

In a way, children suffer less than older people. They know little or nothing of evils to come. Dinny for instance never realised what the consequences of his accident were likely to be. Therefore, when in due course he was made aware of the nature of his misfortune, he received the intelligence with indifference. The pain had ebbed away by then ; and the Sister had spoken hopefully of how well a body can get about with a crutch ; let alone that betimes there do be wooden feet that'll leave you real handy.

In time he grew accustomed to his surroundings ; to the unimaginable cleanliness that at first had seemed so unnecessary and wearisome. Now he could appreciate the soothing warm water and fresh towels ; the crisp pillow-case, the warm, light coverlets ; the sweet air blowing night and day through the great ward in which he was lying ; the good, sufficient food, All this Dinny explained to Bride when, after some time, she came to see him.

Dinny had had a pretty bad bout of pain one night

and the Sister, pitying him all the more because of the attempt he was making to keep his trouble to himself, said, "Would you like to see Brigit?"

For by this time she had learned quite a good deal about Dinny and his circumstances—not from himself, he was too shy—but from Miss Brabazon. She had begun visiting more frequently than before at this, which had been her father's hospital, since he had passed on; the big, kind doctor who had relieved so much pain and sickness in his day. And now he was gone away from it all, after long suffering for which little alleviation had been possible. People said, how right and good it was of Ruth, to try to interest herself still more now in what he had loved and worked for so long. But they said, too, wasn't it a pity that he had not taken more thought for his only child! Why hadn't he made better provision for her future, and after such a life of wealth and indulgence . . . wasn't it very hard on the girl now? It was even said she was thinking of taking up nursing.

After one of her visits, the Sister asked Dinny, "Wouldn't you like to see Bride?"

He flushed crimson.

"Where . . . is she . . . is she here . . ." and he looked about in such excitement that the Sister almost wished she had never mentioned Bride's name at all. But it had been said, so she went on: "To-morrow we let people in to see their friends who are here; and if you're very good, and go to sleep soon . . . well, I'll see what can be done!"

"To-morrow—and how soon will it be to-morrow?" said Dinny breathlessly.

"Very soon, if you go asleep," said the Sister with

her grave little smile at the evasion of which she had been guilty.

But what she said was true enough. Dinny, ecstatically happy, did fall asleep "good!" and then, her rounds completed, the unwearying sister wrote a message to be conveyed to Brigit, through Miss Ruth. She was to be allowed to see Dinny the following day.

"We must make you very grand this morning, if you're to have a visitor!" said the Sister; and she gave Dinny's fair curls an extra twist. She thought him wonderfully pretty, and however philosophical a nurse may try to be, still large shy eyes and delicate features do count in winning favour. They shouldn't; but there you are. The same throw-back that had given the young Dorans beauty had also imparted a look of distinction which we don't find as a rule among street-arabs. This day, with freshly-laved skin and clean nighty, Dinny might have been a young lord. His eyes were bright, his whole face lit up with delight at the thought of seeing Bride. The Sister began to doubt again the advisability of the visit, so much excitement did it entail; but she could not go back on it now.

At long last, she came! Dinny had watched so many people coming into the ward that morning! Every bed, he thought, had a visitor, except his own. Some of these strangers were wistful; some sad; a few indifferent; but for the most part they were all kindness and sympathy. Dinny was beginning to wonder, could there be any mistake! Maybe the Sister was only making sport of him!

And behold!—quite suddenly, there she was, beside him; kneeling on the floor, with her arms round him,

kissing him, and . . . crying ! the manly Brigeen ! Yes, she was indeed.

" Why, what's on you, Brigeen ? " asked the little boy, laughing aloud in the joy of having her there ; remember, never before had he been separated from her for more than a few hours . . . " what at all's a trouble to you now ? Is it that Herself is after giving annoyance, or what at all ails you ? "

But Bride said not a word ; only hid her face in the bedclothes and cried there. Not for worlds would she let any of them strange people that were about see her tears. Dinny began to get frightened.

" Whisper, Brigeen, alanna ! " he said, trying to lift up her head with his small weak hands, " you're not let to do that here ! "

" An' who's to hinder me ? " said Brigit, raising a flushed, tear-stained face at this.

Inadvertently Dinny had hit the right key. Dinny perceived with delight that he had the real Brigeen still, when he saw how she pulled herself together, and assumed an almost defiant air as the Sister approached Dinny's bed. She had been occupied with the invidious task of confiscating such delicacies as oranges, sweets, ginger snaps and so forth, not to speak of small sups of whiskey which visitors to friends in hospital love to smuggle in. Bride herself was uncomfortably conscious of the hard-boiled egg from Granny, and the cocoa-nut from Tim, wherewith her pocket was bulging. But now, when the Sister came up, she looked so sweet and kind that Bride forgot to reflect that after all these people were well ped for whatever they did for you ; and along wid all, had the best of eating and drinking . . . so Herself said .

Brigit couldn't look in those kind eyes like stars, that had so often consoled Dinny in his pain and weariness, and then "go behind backs," and be hiding things. So she gave up her contraband wares; and virtue for once had its reward. The Sister said she'd put up the things, and let Dinny have them; they'd do him no harm, in moderation.

"You were very late coming here," said the Sister to Brigit; "maybe you didn't know you'd have to go away so soon. Visiting time's up at twelve, and it's ten minutes to, now . . ."

"I couldn't come no sooner," said Brigit, in a tone that would have sounded sullen to any one except those who, like the Sister, can distinguish between excitement and impudence. She did now; just moved quietly away, out of the ward, before Brigit could make up her mind to explain about the fresh row Herself had got into, and that she, Brigit, had had to appear in the police-court that morning, very unwillingly, to bear witness against her step-mother, and her violent proceedings; and that was what had her late.

Very unwillingly; not that Brigit didn't resent her bruises as well as the torn-out locks of hair, rent from her young head during the course of what she described to Dinny as "the father and mother of a row!" a row of which Dinny himself was the unconscious cause; Herself declaring, with quite unnecessary vigour and picturesqueness of language, that she hadn't a notion on this earthly world of burthening herself any longer with the like of Dinny, that never was much, and now would be no use at all to man nor mortal, and he with a game leg upon him.

"Of course she had a good sup in at that present,

or she'd never be goan on that-a-way," continued Brigit, "but whether or which, where was the sense in the neighbours getting her pull't by the po-lis! And me having to go speak against her in the court! Sure, won't she only have it in for the two of us, when she comes back! But still, let you not be fretting, Dinny; she's in for a month, and that'll sarve her, you'll find."

A month was too far ahead, for Dinny to trouble about what it might bring. There was a more immediate trouble. The visitor's time was up,

"They're all quitting out now," said Brigit; "I'll have to be goan too . . ."

Dinny's face fell.

"Wait till the very very last!" he begged; "sure . . . what's this I was wanting to know . . . and how's Tim?"

"Sure I'm after telling you . . . is getting a grand do . . ."

"Does he be selling much papers those times?"

Before Brigit could answer, the Sister was back and had taken her by the hand, saying, "Come along! don't you see all the others have gone!" and she led Bride out of the ward.

In the corridor she said "Come this way!" and brought Bride along, till they reached the brightest, prettiest, cleanest little room that Brigit, or for the matter of that, anyone else had ever seen. The Sister pushed forward a cushioned chair. "Sit down and wait a minute!" she said, and disappeared. Bride was too shy to sit down, or to do anything but just stand there, wondering what was going to happen, and ought she run away out of it, before anything worse

happened, when the door opened and in came the tall Sister, carrying . . . Dinny in her arms !

She laid him carefully on a couch in the window, and explained, " I wanted to give him a little change. So as you and he had such a short time together, I'm just going to let you have a chat here in my room" and away she went.

The two children looked round, Dinny with a sigh of exquisite enjoyment. It had been so long, so very long, for a small thing like him, just lying there in the same position, in the big ward, seeing nothing different, and not allowed to stir ! Why, Dinny knew every picture on the walls, every chair and table ; the pattern of the quilts ; what to expect at every hour of the day, almost. And now, here he was alone with Brigeen, in a most grand little place, luxurious beyond belief to the young Dorans. And there was Brigeen the beloved, straight foreninst him, ready to talk or to listen ; Brigeen, the longing for whom had been one of Dinny's most poignant torments.

It was then that Bride learned that Dinny was rale snug there ; too well off, Brigit was inclined to surmise ; sarra ha'porth to do only lie there and have his bit brought to him, before he'd have time to be hungry, you'd think. And ladies-lek they were that minded him and washed his face and all to that, and bandaged his foot where they had it took off of him. And Dinny was going to show it to Brigit only, fortunately enough before their combined efforts could loosen the dressings, the Sister was back, with a tray, this time, and two plates upon it, no less !

" You can stay and dine with Dinny to-day ! " she said ; and went off again and shut the door on them.

Well of all the surprises, and that beat ! Surely no two children ever dined more royally than did those two, off boiled mutton with appropriate trimmings ! Bride had never tasted anything like it since that day in the Square with Miss Ruth ; and even then, sure, they were only just helped and no more when Dinny started to go cry, and they had to quit off out of it . . .

This dinner came to a more happy ending ; all too soon, though it was lengthened out with fruit and biscuits, provided by the Sister from her unofficial stores . . . of most celestial flavour were those cakes. And now they were all gone ; and Bride must be gone too. The Sister saw her safely off the premises, a very meek Bride she was then, all the defiance gone clean out of her.

Then the Sister carried Dinny back to his cot. She could see that tears had been flowing, but were being wiped hastily away. Dinny never wished to be too troublesome.

A few days later, Ruth who was coming pretty often in and out by then, remarked upon Dinny's improved looks, and asked how much longer he would be kept in Hospital.

"That depends," said the Sister ; he's getting on well now . . for him, that is ; is out every day. If only he had a decent home to go to, he might leave, but . . . "

"I heard this morning that the step-mother died, suddenly, last night, not that she's any loss, wretched creature that she was ! "

"Oh really ! well, Dinny can stay on a bit, till he's stronger ; he's no trouble ; in fact he's very useful to me in his own way here . . . "

DINNY OF THE DOORSTEP

"Useful? Dinny? How is that?"

"Oh, indeed he is! Did you never notice how clever he is with that little creature in the bed opposite his; she has hip disease as well as a good many other afflictions . . . the little creature can't live much longer, but still . . . Dinny!" and as the little boy looked up at her, smiling now, she added in an undertone, "Did Rosy get her tonic yet? No? Then hadn't you better . . ."

The Sister then lifted Dinny from his cot, and gave him the wee crutch with which he was, as she said, getting so very handy. Then he limped over to refractory Rosy, and took a grave seat beside her, while Ruth and the Sister disappeared behind a screen.

"Give me your hand, the way I can be feeling your pulse," said Dinny, solemnly.

Rosy opened her eyes and extended a little hand, burning like fire, thin as a bird's claw, and white as bone.

"Timper tso," said Dinny, "and heart-failure oo; sure you can't stand it at this gait of goan! We'll have to have that arm of yours off, at once. Have you the bandages ready?"

"Here they are!" said Rosy, with cheerful interest, displaying a collection of torn strips of paper from under the quilt, rolled up into very creditable imitations of those appliances.

"I declare! the little monkey!" said the Sister; "she has torn up Dinny's book . . . it was his great treasure! you only brought it to him last week, you know, and he's hardly dared to look at it himself yet. In fact it's been with Rosy . . . he sent it across to her, to try to divert her when the dressings were being

done . . . Poor Dinny ! you might as well have enjoyed Struwel-Peter while you had him ! ”

“ I must get him another ! ” said Ruth ; who was always forgetting that stray shillings weren’t as plenty with her now as they had been.

“ No ! I wouldn’t do that. Let him give it up ; he’s not unhappy about it, you see ”

“ Have you the lint . . . and the scissors and the . . . and the . . . ”

Dinny’s imagination began to fail him. He took up the medicine-glass, and offered it to Rosy.

“ Now you’re to drink this off ; see here, you always have to take the like of that, before they’ll cut as much as a toe off of you.”

And the duped Rosy drank off the bitter tonic ; and Dinny went on with the grim play of a make-believe operation ; his patient laughing with all her heart while it was in progress ; incidentally adding to the wrongs that Dinny was enduring at her hands by picking out the eyes of the Teddy bear that was among Miss Ruth’s gifts to him.

“ I’ll carry him out now,” said Ruth ; “ Brigit is to be here, soon, she’ll take care of him . . . ”

The hospital grounds were large and beautifully planted ; it was pleasant there. Dinny and Bride were ensconced on a seat a little apart, and there Dinny heard about Herself ; how that she came back from prison, big and fat-looking, and what should happen, only she got at a few shillings that Bride had hid, saving them up ; and she spent that money in drink ; and didn’t she die soon after ; smothered, so she did at night ; Brigit was away, gone to Granny’s because Herself had turned real wicked on her and so she had been advised by some of the other lodgers to quit off.

"So there's an end of her," concluded Bride, "sure if only she'd have behaved someways decent itself"

"An' did no one cry her?" asked Dinny. He was more imaginative than Bride. It was dreadful to him that anyone should die, and not a one be sorry.

"Sure why would they?" said Bride; "not that I'm wishing her any harm now; but she was no good to man nor mortal; not even to herself. I'm living with Granny altogether now."

"I wisht I was there along with the two of yous!" said little Dinny.

Before Bride could make any comment on this remark, the children beheld Miss Ruth coming across the grounds towards them, with another lady; a short, thickset yet somewhat angular person. She wore spectacles, a severe hat and very tight skirt.

"Ah!" said Ruth, "here he is; and if you take him, Miss Stone, you'll find him a very good child . . . won't you be a good boy, Dinny?" Ruth added rather anxiously; while Dinny looked in alarm from one to the other, and then turned to Brigeen, to nestle his hand into her's. What at all was goan to be done with him now, he wondered!

Bride felt his fingers quivering like a bird in hers, and this emboldened her to say, "If . . . if it's a thing that he could be let to quit off out of this . . . if he could be let to come home with me . . . sure, I'd see to mind him . . ."

"Listen, Bride," said Miss Ruth gently; "Dinny must leave this, for his bed is wanted for a little baby that has just been brought in, terribly burnt . . ." Ruth shuddered a little; then went on, "now you

know Dinny needs a lot of care still, to make him quite well and strong. . . ." Here Miss Ruth stopped ; the eyes of the young Dorans were fixed on hers ; Dinny's appealingly ; Brigit's full of a half-defiant questioning

" . . . and so," Ruth went on, choosing her words very carefully, " so the Sister asked me to go to see if Miss Stone could take Dinny. She has the care of a lot of children, and some of them are worse than he is, by far ! "

" The children in our Home have every comfort," said Miss Stone, speaking in a curious, harsh voice, that somehow struck a chill upon Dinny's heart ; " regular and nourishing fare, Miss Brabazon ; a spacious garden . . . "

" Think of that, Dinny—flowers . . ." put in Miss Ruth.

" We have hot and cold baths, and separate beds, in cubicles, you understand (" what's them ? " thought Bride and Dinny). Shall I take you there, little boy ? " she added, turning for the first time to Dinny.

He trembled, but said nothing.

" Shall I take you there, little boy ? " Miss Stone repeated. But this question sounded as if it called for no reply.

From the Stone point of view, it needed none. Here was Dinny, a stray child ; an orphan ; evidently weakly in more ways than one ; crippled now, poor child ! without one belonging to him who could guarantee more than food for the coming day . . not always even that ! And here was the Home, where she was to take him, and where he would have every comfort, as she had explained. Plenty to eat ; a good

bed, with a frilled pillow-case ; and he would be taught a trade.

" You see," Miss Ruth went on, speaking now to Brigit, " Dinny will . . . Dinny won't . . . I mean, on account of his foot, he won't be able to do much at least, not for a while. And Miss Stone will look after him . . . she'll mind him well . . . there are lots of other children there . . . he won't be lonesome . . . and they're all learning knitting . . . or basket-making . . . or carving . . . won't you like to learn something that you can earn money by, Dinny ? "

" I will Miss," Dinny answered obediently.

But his heart died within. And still, what more could he expect, or even wish for, than the prospect unfolded ? It's a pity, the contrariness of people, when other people are doing their best for them, too !

" I can take him now," said Miss Stone ; " I kept the cab on purpose."

There is something dreadful about inevitableness. We rebel instinctively against a decree, howsoever wise, that robs us of our right to choose.

In a flash, Dinny realised how happy he had been in the hospital ; how fond he was of his little cot, with the locker beside it, in which he could store quite a lot of the unconsidered trifles that kindly callers bestow . . . to be sure, little Rosy never was satisfied without finishing at once the jelly that was brought in every Saturday by an old lady . . . Dinny would have been saving with it and made it last the week only his little friend wouldn't let him . . . but Rosy ! and she bullied him in everything . . . but who'd give her her medicine now, and she *that* little

and contrary in herself . . . And the Sister . . . and Miss Ruth . . . would he ever, ever get to see them again ! But no one knew these misgivings of Dinny's. He was too " fearful in himself " to say anything about them, let alone to resist. He said nothing ; just went on fingering the Teddy bear Miss Ruth had brought him, and that Rosy had just flung on the floor, the last time he had offered it to her notice, so that now he had it again for himself . . . He said nothing ; so no wonder Miss Stone and even Ruth thought he was indifferent.

Such natures as Dinny's, however, have great capacity for silent misery. In this case, no one suspected such a thing, except Brigeen. She, standing balancing herself on one foot behind Dinny's seat, saw a look in his eyes that she understood. But what could she do, either ? She just slipped away, with a little awkward curtesy to Miss Brabazon and a nod to Dinny ; and perhaps it was wisest. What good could she do, staying there ! No one would mind one word she'd say. And it might only l'ave Dinny worse . . .

So there and then, the great change was effected. The Sister came out busy as she was, to kiss Dinny and bring him his few possessions, mainly toys. Then he was carried to the cab, and driven away, with Miss Stone beside him. What is a child, with his unspoken wishes, the feelings, the fears which he can't express in words, against the powers that be—particularly when the said powers mean only to do him good !

Certainly Miss Ruth had no other idea ; wishing now to see him happy and independent so far as that was possible ; the Sister had done everything in her

sphere for him, ministering to his maimed little body, and tenderly helping him back to such health and well-being as were attainable for him; and Miss Stone was prepared to carry on the good work. She was not only willing, but anxious that this pale crippled child of the slums should have all the benefits of the carefully-thought-out scheme, the outcome of which was the Home for Helpless Children, of which she had been lately appointed Manager . . . True, she had had no training for the duties; she possessed no natural aptitudes therefor. But she had influential friends, on whom she had claims; and she was badly off. It just fitted nicely into the scheme of things. And she was quite a good woman; sincere and conscientious; even-tempered, too. Just the right person for the post, it was said . . . and yet

Granny would have said, "it's hard to know by people."

To a child like Dinny, who had always possessed at least some freedom of action, the monotony of the routine necessary in such an Institution is very trying. To be sure, in the Hospital, too, there had been rules and enforced regularity. But there, at first he had been too suffering to care; and later, there had been the serene, the gracious presence of the Sister, and she had known how to relax wisely, though she could also be very firm.

But now Dinny was no longer actually ill. All he needed was just the care that indeed Miss Stone was most willing to bestow. But the Rules! She was adamant about them. Many of them were obsolete now; some were useless, but still, all were rigidly

enforced. Miss Stone, as she often said, was there to see that they were carried out. She embodied the letter of the law ; it was not her fault that the spirit escaped her. Absolutely trustworthy was she, with regard to her duties, as she understood them ; also absolutely devoid of sympathy, that subtle heaven-sent gift, which discerns things hidden in the silent hearts of others. Children need it most. Many a life-long heartache dates back to some misunderstood order, or remark, or, worse than these, some bit of ridicule, or word of unjust blame . . .

Not every child is made unhappy by these things, but Dinny was. He had had plenty to bear in his short life ; the cold and hunger and weariness ; ill-treatment from his step-mother and Mr. Byrne, not to speak of school. But there had been Granny as an occasional resource, and always, yes, always !—there had been Brigeen.

To an outsider, Brigit's methods were rough and ready in the extreme. Her tongue was sharper than was just seemly ; her manners often left a good deal to be desired. But well Dinny knew what lay behind these ; the biggest bit of bread, the biggest share of the cake, in rain or cold ; the watchfulness that often took a blow upon her own shoulders that was meant by Herself for Dinny. Brigit and Granny had meant everything that was best, in Dinny's world ; and no Brigeen or Granny were with him now.

It was Miss Stone's nightly custom, before going to bed herself, to make a tour around the Home, that she might be sure that everything was in order. She would visit each little cot, with carefully shaded lamp in hand, to see for herself, that each child was all

right. In the course of one of these peregrinations, a night or two after Dinny's admission, she found him literally bathed in tears. You know how a lonesome child can go on crying, with sopped cheeks upon a sopped pillow.

Her astonishment . . . she was then still somewhat new to the position . . . her astonishment was great.

"What's the matter?" she asked, towering above him, so Dinny fancied, to giant size. Her hair was carefully screwed away for the night; she was clad in a severely plain dressing-gown, and big felt slippers that made no noise, so that you never could know when she'd be coming in on the door. And no doubt there is something comforting in the appearance at your bedside of a watcher in familiar day-dress, such as the Sister and Nurses at the hospital wore. One feels then that these hours of pain are not quite apart from the daytime, after all.

"Why are you crying?" persisted Miss Stone; not a bit unkindly, you understand, but really . . . ! "little boys don't go to bed to lie awake and cry! So what is it?"

But no reply came. Dinny had none to offer. At least, none that would be any use to Miss Stone. For how could he explain to her that he was lonesome for little Rosy opposite to him—let alone the Sister herself, that would know what a body would be thinking about! and that he missed the shaded light that used to burn all night right foreinist a picture that was called the Good Shepherd; just a tired-looking sort of a man with a kind face and He with a little lamb in his arms; Dinny often went to sleep looking

at the two of them ; whereas there wasn't a picture next nor near his crib in the Home . . .

" Are you thirsty ? " said Miss Stone, with placid patience.

" I'm not dry, I thank ye, mam ! " said Dinny, choking back a sob.

" Then don't be crying any more ! Go to sleep ! Why isn't that what we all go to bed for ! Think of all the poor little boys, no bigger than you are, who have no beds at all to-night ; and no suppers either ! How glad and thankful they'd be, to get into this nice clean warm place ! "

" They would, mam," Dinny agreed, politely ; he could not well say anything different.

But all the same . . . !

There were lions in the paths that lay around and through that wonderful Home ; at least, for such a child as Dinny. He dreaded the lessons most. We have seen how he had been stumped by four times seven ; and when it came to the basket-making, his fingers felt like sausages. And the child who sat next to him in the dining-hall knew which hand the fork ought to go into. At the Hospital there had been no such difficulties. He had eaten mostly from a spoon there ; and the Sister had a large-hearted way of regarding such delinquencies as spilling a sup of tea, or even putting your fingers into your plate. But here, these things were criminal.

Dinny didn't put these things into words, even to himself. What Miss Stone had said that night that she found him crying in bed, taught him to keep his griefs to himself. After that on her rounds, she sometimes noticed that young Doran had his head

covered up. She would let him be then. It was wisest ; also easiest.

But Dinny pined. He did not improve as the Sister had expected. There was no special reason for it, but he continued white and puny, in spite of the good air and food, and the care so conscientiously bestowed upon him and all her other charges, by Miss Stone. These last improved apace. Dinny was disappointing. Not to Miss Stone, however. She did her duty by him as well as the other crippled children and very sensibly did not worry further. Why should she? How indeed could she? We are all hedged round by our own limitations.

Miss Ruth had only been able to call once to see Dinny, and then, of course, a body couldn't go and be giving trouble. There was nothing to complain about, even had Dinny dared to do such a thing ; nothing, that is, that ladies the lek of Miss Ruth would understand. Besides, Miss Ruth seemed someways changed ; not the same gait of going that she used to have at all ; kind of course, the same as ever, only as if every now and then she'd be forgetting where she was or whom she was talking to. She had the eyes of one that was looking eagerly across wide seas. Well, to be sure, Dinny didn't say this to himself ; for one thing, he had never seen any sea, wide or narrow. But he felt very far away from the young lady that had always been so kind and had meant so well, as Granny had frequently pointed out.

It was puzzling, this change in Miss Ruth ! But if Dinny could have seen the letter that Ruth was carrying about with her always then ! A marvellous letter, she thought it was ! But to the

unprejudiced outsider, it was by no means exceptional.

It ran something like this :—

“ MY DEAR RUTH,—You will wonder at getting this letter from me, and I don't know if I ought to write it or not, after what has passed . . . but let that be ; it's over.

“ I only heard just now, through a chance letter that reached me here, about your great trouble, so I thought I might at least write to tell you how sorry I am to think of all you must have been going through.”

(You see, Jack was by no means a polished letter-writer.)

“ I trust you have been able to bear up, and to remember that he is far better off now. He is at rest and done with suffering, and he could never have recovered. Please remember that, and that he would only have gone on in pain. May God comfort you ! ”

(Jack felt, when he had this written, that he ought to have gone on and said more, but after all those four words contained about all he thought himself justified in expressing.)

“ I hope you are feeling pretty well. I shall be here (then followed an address in San Francisco) for some weeks still. My patient is doing well, and he likes this place. I think it's wretched. The city is all right, but the life isn't worth living. Nothing to do but loaf. I was glad to get another patient last week ; a poor woman who does some of the cleaning in this hotel. She looks bad and

coughs a lot. I spoke to her one day. . . 'You're from Ireland, sir?' she said; and when I said yes, she got very excited, and told me her story; Had come out there twenty years ago; and now if she went back she thought there wouldn't be one she knew, to care; she never got an answer to her letters, for years past; so she said. When she spoke about there being no one to care after twenty years, I began to think I've not been as many weeks and I suppose I'd have the same story to tell."

(Jack was feeling glum when he wrote this; still, Ruth needn't have cried the way she did, on reading it. She wouldn't, either, if she had seen what a game of billiards Jack played after he had posted this document to her. But young men are made like that.)

"She told me a man named Doran had turned up in some lodging-house she used to work in when she could get no better job. He was too far gone in drink, and its consequences, to be relied on; but he claimed to have married a sister of hers, in Mayo, long ago. She's dead, the sister I mean; and this woman can find out nothing about her family. She knows there were children, I thought of Bride and Dinny—your little friends; but, of course, it's quite a common name. But hearing it out here in this beastly place made me think of things and feel lonesome; but I don't suppose anyone else remembers that day at the Zoo; and I'll hardly remember it for ever either.—Your sincere friend,

"JACK."

He added a postscript to this ; just five words :

“ Ruth, for God’s sake, write ! ”

And when he had them written, he stared at them, and ended by cutting off the strip of paper from the bottom of the sheet on which he had set them down.

“ I have no business writing stuff like that to her ! I was a fool ! I should have thought of all the money she will have, and never have thought of her in that way . . . But still it would be beastly unkind not to write at all ”

Jack was terribly down on his luck then. Since that evening when he had parted from Ruth in the Square, he had often wondered at what he now called his infernal cheek in dreaming that ever Ruth could marry him. But at the time he had felt very sore and indignant.

As a matter of fact, his ideas on many subjects had undergone marked change since leaving home. Only one thing remained unaltered ; that was, his feeling towards Ruth. He was fully convinced that no other fellow could ever appreciate that paragon as he did. But had she known all he felt, or, knowing it, since she could scarcely be in ignorance of what he had so often tried to impress upon her . . . had she valued it ?

There was the rub ! Jack was a simple sort of chap himself. He knew nothing of modern subtleties in regard to these things. He was merely quite firm in his belief that nothing exists in this world of ours better worth having than such love as he felt for Ruth.

The question was, what did she think ? Once he had felt so absolutely certain that he knew her mind ;

and that on this point she "thought through the same quill as he did."

But if so, how could she have given him up on such an inadequate pretext! Just to please the maundering fancy of . . . well, sick men do have strange notions, but why should they be gratified, when doing so meant sacrificing their life-happiness and they were only beginning the world that he was leaving. . . . Would Ruth think the promise her father had exacted from her binding still? or what was Jack to look for? Or would she want to be freed from that vow? Why should a hand from the grave be permitted to hold her still? But, did she wish to be free? What was in her mind now? Jack would have given a good deal . . . if he had it, to know that.

But suppose, just suppose she ever thought about him now, could he . . . ought he to approach her again? He had never set up for being extra scrupulous, but how any man could marry a girl with a heap of money, while he had none but what he could make . . . It would be simply rotten!

And yet What good chums they had been!

Thus, after much cogitation, Jack sat down and wrote the letter just given here. It reached Ruth as we have seen, very soon after Dinny's removal from the Hospital to the Home. It puzzled her not a little. The words were clear enough, but was that all Jack had to say to her—after all there had been between them!

Well, she contrived to read a good deal into those bald lines; and then after much hesitation and re-writings and so on, she accomplished a reply that Jack

found quite as enigmatical as his letter had been to her. You would imagine that these two young people were trying to keep one another at arms' length.

But however much we may juggle with Life and our chances therein, Fate has her little look-in too.

There was a Visitors' day at the Home for Crippled Children also ; and thus it came about that at the appointed hour, Brigeen the beloved presented herself duly.

Dinny was sitting alone in the pretty grounds, on a seat close to the high wall that, so it seemed to the child, was hemming him in, away from the world he used to know and the people that made it for him. His heart would be full to bursting sometimes, when he would think of Granny and the big bed in the cellar ; of Brigit, and their wanderings about the streets, hand-in-hand. He had had his two feet then. What would he do now, supposen he was wanting to get across a street ! His heart died within him, as he remembered what had happened him at that crossing.

And suddenly while his slow mind was going over all these things, there was Brigeen ! walking up to him, across that wide, sunny and lonesome grass-plot, and she was bringing with her, in her ragged skirts, her unkempt curly head, her free movements, a breath of their old life again, when often they were hungry and cold and "dreeped wid the wet," too ; but they were together, unwatched, coming and going as they chose.

Up she came to him, where he was on his comfortable cushioned seat, and "Brigeen ! Is that yourself that's in it !" whispered Dinny, and burst out crying.

Brigit looked at him, amazed.

"Why, what's 'on' you, at all at all, to make you go cry!" Brigit said.

"I want to get out o' this!" sobbed Dinny, unconsciously quoting the celebrated starling. His cup had long been full; Brigit's advent supplied the touch that made it overflow.

"Sure, what's a trouble to you here, and you with your fill to eat and drink, and the grandest of a house . . . and the little bed you have . . . and . . ."

"I do be lonesome here!" said Dinny; "it's wishful I do be to see the whole of yous . . ."

"Well, sure, and amn't I here; and Granny might get to come . . ."

"And Tim? Do you think would Tim Carty come too?" asked Dinny, with another sob. He thought it would be wonderful to see that young hero again, and hear from him tales of his great and gay deeds.

"Troth, it ud be hard to know by the same Tim, what he'd take a notion to do, ay or to leave alone!" said Brigit, with a toss of her head but a softening eye.

Dinny, like Gallio, cared for none of these things. His only wish was, to get away, away from it all! from the upright, the impeccable Miss Stone; from the enclosing walls, the regularity, the routine that prevailed at the Home. He despaired of ever seeing the familiar things again and Brigit was puzzled. He was better off than ever she thought he'd be! What had he to fret about?

Some dim comprehension of Dinny's mood, however, must have come to her; she suddenly realised how unhappy he was, spite of it all. And she said, with more tenderness than usual, "See here, Dinny! Look

what I've for you in my pocket—a whole sugar-stick that Granny gave me for you. Me and you can eat it here in this grand shelterly little corner, *annonst-lek*"; for Bride had not forgotten the Hospital restrictions.

It tasted all the better for being thus surreptitiously consumed; the while Brigit prattled away, about what was going on in the old tenement house, in which she herself was once more installed.

"Granny's not feeling too well in herself, at all, this while back," she said, "so it's as good for me be with her of a night, and to carry the basket up the steps for her, and see her started on her rounds for the day; betimes I do go with her . . . and Miss Julia has me l'arned to sew and darn things . . . and her school is bigger nor ever it was. The Bishop himself that is sending her money now to'arst the rent, and getting boots and things for the lads when she'll have places found for them. . . ."

"Is Tim in it yet?" asked Dinny.

"Ay is he, but sure didn't she get Tim a do, in some shop . . . there's what he does be telling me, but you mightn't mind all he says! Keeping the books, he says he is . . . And he wearing a tie now, and a pin in it, no less! You'd have to laugh at him; but he says you have to mind your eye and be someways pertickler or you'll not be kept . . ."

Here Bride took a surreptitious glance, at the disreputable boots, down at heel and worn through at the toes that showed from beneath her frayed frock. Perhaps she felt that they emphasized the step up and away from her level that had been achieved by Tim. But if that were so, her mood quickly changed. She

flung back her touzled curls with her old defiant cheerfulness, and asked Dinny, "Do you ever see Miss Ruth, those times?"

"No more nor the once, since I was took here," replied Dinny.

"It's what them all are saying, that she's quare and changed, since the father died on her; lonesome in herself she appears to be, and only comes near us a very odd time now. And Dr. Jack, everybody misses him the terriblest ever you knew. The new secretary they have over the Guild or whatsumever it does be called, isn't the one gait of goan at all with Dr. Jack. Some has it that there might have been some falling-out between Miss Ruth and him, they that used to be goan about together as thick as thieves, so much that it appeared they must have been 'speaking,' What else had him goan off the way he did . . ."

"Tim Carty that said one day, he believed it was what the young Doctor was taking a notion of getting marrit, and that there's more marrit nor keeps good houses," began Dinny, who had a way of treasuring up Tim's oracular utterances, whether he understood them or not.

"Tim has a gradale to say!" said Brigit, sarcastically. The silence that followed was broken presently by Dinny who said, with some eagerness, "What do you think but we're to be took to the Pantomime next week!"

"The Pantomime?" said Brigit with a gasp.

"Ay in troth! A few of us that's able is to walk, and I'll be let go with them, and the rest is to go in cabs. . . ."

"Och, isn't it well to be yours!" sighed Brigit,

thinking with lively regret of her own marred prospects in that direction; "nearly worth while being without a body's foot to be seeing the lek of that . . ."

" . . . and we're to be gaven oranges and cakes and sweets as well," added Dinny, "but sure If only you could be in it too, Brigeen! I wonder . . . Will we be seeing the Cor'l Cave and the Fairies . . ."

"Sure what at all!" said Brigit; "don't they have some new design there every Chrissemas! Next Saturday, is it? I dunno but I might be somewhere about . . ."

"Och Brigeen, do! Sure it's what I'm afeard of me life, to be walking, once you'll get to the throng parts about the theayter, for fraid I'd be knocked down again . . ."

"And is it that you wouldn't be took in one of the cabs?"

Dinny gave a wriggle, expressive of much; then, "I was pref-ferred to drive . . ." he hesitated.

"Well? and why not?"

"Bekase . . . bekase I said I'd liefer to walk . . ."

"A-why?"

To Brigit and her kind, a drive in a cab is a prime luxury, seldom attained save at funerals, six inside.

"Sure," he stopped again; then brought out with a burst, "Miss Stone that'll be in one of the cabs . . . and so . . ."

"Well, 'tis you that's comical!" declared Brigit, still uncomprehending; "but sure you must please yourself what way you like!" and without further ceremony she departed.

As she made her way back to the old tenement

house, she beheld to her amazement the two friends of whom she had just been talking to Dinny. That was Miss Ruth, she'd know her anywhere by the hoith of her, and the black veil . . . and she goan along much the same as ever, only a bit slower, and to say there was Doctor Jack along with her, that every one was saying once he went off might never come back again . . . ! Looking big and brown about the face he was, someways older-looking, Brigit considered ; and the way they were talking, as if there wasn't one in this world wide only their two selves . . . you'd wonder what it could be that had them that anshis-looking, and still betimes the way they'd laugh . . . !

And if Brigit had known just what they were discussing, she would have been still more surprised. She, indeed . . . none of us would have seen anything astonishing in their being once more together, and on the old terms. Well, not exactly that ! for though they were again an engaged couple, Ruth was no longer the wealthy heiress of former report. But the queer part of it was, the way they both were looking at what more sensible people would have regarded as a calamity.

"It's all turned out splendidly !" Ruth said ; "because if I had all the money you believed I was to have when you went off on that trip, you'd never even have given me the chance of . . . well, in the end I've had to propose to you, haven't I ? You're so horribly stand-off ! It wasn't fair to . . . to make me"

"Seemed to come natural to you after all ; never took a feather out of you," said Jack, with one of his old laughs.

"And Father—ah, my dear Father . . . ! To think

he never knew. Isn't it queer, so clever a man not really knowing"

"You mean about how his affairs stood?" said Jack; "well I don't know that it is; he was too busy working for others, till the last few months, and then he was too ill to think; fortunately. . . ."

"He would have fretted about me," said Ruth; "and he needn't have."

"It's the kind of thing that happens every day," Jack said, "he made pots of money and spent it like water. Not on himself. No one will ever know all the lame dogs he's helped over the stile. And there is something, surely . . ."

"The house-rents," said Ruth; "well, Jack I can't touch that slum property! To think that little Dinny and Tim and all those others that we were patronisingly helping and meddling with, were starving and dying by inches, many of them, to . . . to keep up our fine living . . . That day they came, the children I mean, with Granny to have tea in our garden with me . . . Why, they had as much right there as I had . . . I see that now!"

"Oh come, draw it mild, you know!" from Jack.

"Yes, they had! And they have now," excitedly; "my dress . . . my theatres and good living . . . they were paying for them all, one way or other, with that dreadful life they were leading, in their unthinkable 'homes,' and with diseases that need not be there . . . and bad habits, drink and dirt, because they're just herded . . . without the common decencies . . . like cattle I was going to say, only who'd house animals that are worth money as our poor are housed! Jack, I can't touch those rents! Father never knew, he

was always too busy at the hospital you know . . . and he left the management of those tenement houses to a man he trusted . . .”

“ I know ! That villain that has bolted now with all the ready he could lift. . . .”

“ Oh, Father thought everyone was like himself !”

“ Well ; better trust all and be deceived . . .” said Jack ; “ anyway no one ever left a cleaner, kinder record after him . . and I’m not the one to quarrel with his methods, since . . . And after all . . Listen now Ruth”

And thereupon Jack had imparted to her the information that had enabled him to hear of her lack of means with equanimity, not to say satisfaction. There had been an interview with the family lawyer, who had had agreeable news for Jack. Long nursing on the old estate had begun to tell : things weren’t by any means as black as the owner had represented to his grandson. They never had been, in fact.

“ It won’t be a Golconda,” said Jack, “ but if you’ll risk it”

“ It’ll be heaps !” said Ruth, who till the change had come, never had bothered about where the money came from that her Father had supplied without even a remark. She was determined on economising. If she gave up three-guinea hats and twelve-button gloves, and . . . and . . . oh, there were lots of things like that, . . . why, they would pay for coal and bread and the things you had to have.

“ It’s just a matter of management,” she said sagaciously.

Jack had had no idea till then that Ruth was so extremely wise.

The great day came, the day of the treat of the little cripples, when they were to be taken to the theatre. And now surely, Dinny of the Doorstep was going to be very happy !

Once before had this brilliant prospect been in view for him, when by dint of painful scrimping, the friends had scraped together what would admit them to the cheapest part of the house ; thence to behold Brigit in pink " wraide " and spangles, dancing far below. The thing had never come off, but what joy they had in its anticipation, ragged, barefoot, hungry though they were !

Now here was Dinny going, really, to the theatre ; very clean, and well-fed and dressed as comfortably as need be ; his one foot shod respectably. The friend who was giving the treat wasn't one to spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar. The seats were the best, cabs were provided, and eatables as Dinny had narrated to Bride . . and still . . .

On the appointed day, Dinny having elected to walk, set forth among those considered able to transport themselves, under the care of a couple of servants from the Home. Nothing could be safer.

Dinny, limping along, recognised many of the old landmarks. The way led past well-known places. There was the very street down which he had so often wandered with Brigeen hand-in-hand. There beyond lay the beautiful Square. . . Many a time had Brigit painfully hoisted him up, to let him peep through the railings at the glories within. Dinny even distinguished the big house, the doorstep of which was so closely connected with his own struggles across the threshold of life. And the very window from which

Miss Ruth had shamelessly flung down pauperising coppers in the small hours. There was the wide and windy corner, the scene of his debut as understudy to Tim in the paper-selling business ; of Miss Ruth's hansom . . .

The procession had now reached a certain crossing which they must take to reach the theatre. Dinny was the last to essay the passage ; still the Snaky-boots that Tim had once designated him he was. He stood hesitating and supporting himself on the crutches that had been presented to him by a generous visitor only the day before. Dinny had been told to use them, but he wasn't yet accustomed to them.

Dinny's heart was very full. With the sight of the well-known haunts the flavour of his old life came back ; the freedom, the adventure . . . Cold and hunger and weariness had been there, but somehow, now, these things merged in memory with many an unexpected bit of luck ; some hour of agreeable lounging ; scraps of toothsome food, such as would never have been tolerated in the Home, however. Dinny and his companions sometimes loathed the meals there, plentiful and wholesome though they were. But where was the variety that makes the spice of life ! There never was anything strange, under Miss Stone's capable guidance.

And while we thus at some length try to give Dinny's point of view, the girl who was guardian of his party deserves some consideration. She had convoyed her group across the street, counted them over, found one missing ; then discovered that Dinny was that one.

" Little nuisance ! " she said to herself ; " and what am I to do with the others while I go for him ? "

It was distracting, being in charge of a band so helpless.

The girl was in the act of herding up her flock in a safe corner, while she hurried back for Dinny, when a sudden commotion took place close at hand.

The first of the cabs conveying the more helpless cripples happened to be drawn by a decrepid old horse who should have been in a Home himself. Just as he reached the fateful corner, this horse fell ; and so discouraged was he thereat that it scarcely needed the prompt sitting-on-his-head resorted to by his driver to ensure his lying still till further orders.

This catastrophe of course diverted the maid's attention away from Dinny. She was among the first of a crowd that collected at once, to offer a hand with the helpless children inside, under Miss Stone herself. It took some time to smooth matters down ; and while this was being done a curious thing happened.

All along the route, Dinny had been anxiously looking for "some signs" of Brigit or Tim. They were to have been there. What had come to them ! What at all was keeping them ! Even Dinny himself hadn't realised till now how he longed to see them.

What good was even the theyater itself if he wasn't to get a sight of them all before it ! He sent another, a last despairing look all round.

There, at long last, was something familiar. Not Brigeen, nor even Tim . . . no, but the beloved old shawl, without which Mrs. Molally was never seen in public ! There it was ; a sight for sore eyes. . . But it was moving away, away . . . She didn't see him ! Oh Granny, Granny . . . !

Something uncontrollable rose up in the child's heart. The sight of the old friend was all he needed. Just a mad dash of revolt! away, back to the old life, the things, the people that had made Dinny's world.

He formed no plan. There wasn't time for that. But by chance he seized the right moment when the Powers that seemed to have control of him were otherwise engaged. Flinging prudence to the winds, Dinny urged himself forward on his crutches across the street, in pursuit of that shawl . . .

"Granny! Och Granny, wait for me!" he cried, his strength failing.

But Granny did hear him. She turned round; saw with astonishment who was at her heels; laid down the inevitable basket and opened her arms. In a trice Dinny was once more encircled by comforting Love.

"And is it yourself that's in it, Dinny avick! Sure I never knew a bit of you! You're that grand-appearing! But what at all's a trouble?"

She could feel his sobs.

"Take me with you! Oh, Granny! let me go home with you! Sure you won't ax to be sending me back!"

"Ah-why would I if you don't want to go? But is it that you have no wish for being in it? Why, what at all did they do 'on' you, avick machree?"

"Och, make haste Granny for fraid they'd see me. . ."

"What at all! I'd like to see the wan would dar' lay a finger on my little bird and he with his ould Granny . . .!"

And here it was ; the foolishness, the unreasoning tenderness that Dinny had been pining for, all those months. He had it now. And the only effect it had was to make him burst out crying again, and thrust his head still further in under the old shawl, creeping out of sight like a wounded animal.

" Bring me home with you Gran ! Don't let them take me away from you ! "

" Sure why would I ! " quoth the old Irishwoman with native relish for being " agin' Government " of any sort.

The crowd was still swaying about the fallen cab-horse. All attention was being absorbed by that incident. There was no one to miss Dinny. Each one in authority thought some one else had him in charge.

So it was that no one noticed the little lame boy who was limping away with such rapidity, his retreat hidden by the ample Paisley-shawl covered back of Mrs. Molally.

Off they went with a gleeful sense of wrongful adventure. In Dinny this was chastened by dread of being overtaken and brought back to the Home. He was breathless, as much from this fear as from haste.

But he need not have been in any anxiety. He eluded them all ; the maid who had had him in charge ; Miss Stone, terribly agitated by the accident, so that she forgot Dinny for the time being ; even the stately polis-man, of whom enquiries were presently being made, for a little lame chap that had been with the other crippled children. Even while he was replying with ponderous majesty that he " had seen no boy

answering to that description," at that very moment, Dinny, panting and tired, but smiling again, with that slow little smile of his, was hurrying down the steps that led to Granny's cellar.

"Sure an' you'll not ax to be sending me back, Gran?" he begged once more, not yet allowing himself to believe that he had escaped.

"Troth an' I won't; and let you not be one bit afeard!"

"Maybe it's what they might come s'arching here for me . . . Won't you lock the door on them, Granny?"

"Tubbee sure an' I will; and let you creep in ander the bed, and there's where you'll be safe!"

Dinny gave a sigh of relief.

"But who at all is it I hear 'ithin there, talking? Some strange voices . . . I hope in God there's nothing astray since I started out this morning . . . Brigeen that was to have met me at that corner and never come . . ."

The old woman was trembling herself now, at the thought of possible mishap. But she had learned that you must take the world as it comes. She pushed the door open . . . and here was another anxiety . . . the door being unlocked . . . and not a one only Brigeen knew where the key was hid . . . But she went in as boldly as she could, Dinny in her wake.

Then, "Och, to be sure!" said Granny; and even if you didn't find much relevance in the words, the tone showed her relief; "is it yourself that's in it, Miss Ruth *ahagur*! You're as welcome as the flowers in May! It's long since you took the light from my door, but sure it's likely you had plenty else to be doing, nor

to be coming here ; and proud I am to see you . . . and Dr. Jack, I hope I see you well, sir ; back again from foreign parts, thank God, that sent you safe ! I hope you're getting the health, sir ? ”

“ Never better ! ” said Jack cheerfully. There was the old jolly ring in his voice again. (There was also another ring, in its place on Ruth's slender hand. She had one glove off, as if she wanted to be sure it was there.)

“ And Bride ! ” Mrs. Molally went on ; “ is this where you had yourself hid on me, and I on the look-out for yerself and Tim there beyant in the Square . . and what do yous think ; only poor Dinny . . where is he, the crathur ? oh ay ; sure I knew he was close on the top of me and I coming in on the door there . . ”

An agitated rustling at the foot of the big bed attracted the eyes of the rest of the party, to look at the object which Granny was contemplating with such complacency. They could just see Dinny's one foot, as it was being drawn after the rest of his small person, into the obscurity afforded by that notable piece of furniture. And to the astonishment of the others. “ Pull in the crutches, too, avick machree, ” advised Granny, eagerly.

“ Sure, noan of yous will tell ‘ on ’ me ! ” came from the retreat of this young fugitive . . .

“ A-why would we ! ” reassuringly Granny spoke to Dinny ; and then she was beginning to explain the position to the others, “ It's what the crathureen can't content himself beyant there in that Home he was put into . . . says he'd far liefer to be here at home with his ould Gran ; so sure there's no sense in having him annoyed . . . and so I promised him

to let him stop here, and hide and we not to let on, and . . .”

“Och, Granny! never heed him now! Sure it’s what . . . Look-at-here! Doctor Jack’s after bringing the greatest of news home with him”

Brigit stopped at that. She was shaking all over with excitement. Her eyes were blazing; her cheeks crimson; her words, usually so ready, choked at her lips. She looked from Granny to Ruth; from Ruth to Jack; passing over poor Tim (who was standing in the background), as if he didn’t count; then she said, “*You* tell Granny, Miss, if it would be pleasing to you?”

But Ruth only turned to Jack, for she too seemed to have some underlying excitement of her own, that kept her from coherent speech. And then Jack came to the rescue; though even he was scarcely more than intelligible.

But somehow he got the story told; and somehow they all grasped its import; though indeed it was hard to take it in at first, it was all so wonderful!

Such things do happen, however; and outside the world of fiction. It has occurred before and will again that emigrants, dying in far distant lands have left money which falling from theirs into faithful hands, has finally reached rightful claimants at home.

This had come to pass now. That heart-scald, Mr. Doran, had had a slice of what is known as Blunderer’s Luck. As Aunt Kate had said, he hadn’t been too long at the mining; and we may surmise that he had displayed no greater skill and perseverance in that pursuit than in any other of his desultory efforts at bread-winning.

And yet he had had luck ! He had found gold. Almost as important, he had chanced on a pal who was honest. So when Mr. Doran had finally contrived to drink himself into his grave, this man had seen after things ; had had him buried and had honourably brought to the only address Doran had ever mentioned, what was left of the dead man's earnings after clearing off his debts.

At this address had been Kate Cullen ; sister to poor Marg Doran ; the Aunt Kate who had written those intercepted letters to young Brigit ; who had albeit unwittingly provided the decent little " duds " in which Bride used to go to her dancing-class.

Aunt Kate had started home for Ireland as soon as she could, having a longing to get back and be buried when her time came with her people in the little old grave-yard in the County Clare. This start had been made under the auspices of Doctor Jack, who took her in charge on the journey.

But she never reached Clare, alive or dead. She only lasted till New York was two days behind her. Then she died. Before this, however, she had handed over the money she had in charge to Jack, with instructions to see that it benefited " poor Marg's children."

"And it's all done as right as rain," said Jack, " because I got a lawyer chap on board to do the thing"

"To be sure an' so you did," said Granny, "and poor Kate. . . God rest her sowl ! Buried in the sea, you tell me, sir, and I pray the good God to shadow them that's gone, that we loved here, in Heaven too . . . Ah dear, dear ! Sure it appears no len'th at all since

poor Kate and Marg were just young little slips of things like Brigeen and Dinny here, as wild as little goats upon the mountain-side they were. And just made upon one another, it would delight you to behold them. Wherever one was, the other wouldn't be far ! Piling turf in the bog, or gethering kelp down by the sea . . . or picking praties . . always together they'd be . . . And now to think the two of them to be gone and me left on here . . ."

She stopped and shook her head. Ruth said gently, " Isn't it well for these two children that you are left ; who else is there to do for them ? "

" Sure, and didn't you do your share too, acushla ? "

And Jack who knew how Ruth felt about what she counted her failure with regard to the young Dorans, interposed by saying, " All this time, none of you are asking me about the money. . . "

" Sure, whatever it is and doesn't your Honour know, and isn't that enough ! "

" Give a guess ! " said Jack.

" Oh, tell them ! tell them at once ! " from Ruth. And Jack had a certain satisfaction in catching the old impatience in her voice. So then he did tell it all. His statement was received with gasps of incredulity. Granny had to sit on the edge of the bed, so overcome was she.

" Glory be to God, sir ; but is it the truth you're after telling us ! "

" It is indeed, Granny ; something like five hundred pounds to divide between them. "

Bride who had been standing looking from one to another with shining eyes, now said half under her breath, " Where at all is it ? "

"Where? You want to see it—to hold it in your own hand? I don't wonder! Well, for the present it's in the Bank, for safety, you know. I'm to mind it for you till Dinny is . . . till he's quite grown up. But I can spend it on you as I think right. And by and by you will have it altogether."

Bride turned radiant eyes on the young Doctor and Ruth.

"You that have it at this present, sir? Oh, Granny . . ." and here Bride flung herself on Mrs. Molally's neck and whispered excitedly to her.

"Ay, ay, acushla," Granny murmured approvingly; "you're only saying what's right . . . but let you say it out loud, yourself."

"Och no, Granny! let you . . ." said Brigeen, turning shy.

"What's all this about?" said Jack; "I don't carry all that money in my coat pocket, if it's wanting you are to see it to-night!"

"No, of course not, sir," said Granny; only she's wishing . . . do you see, sir . . . if . . . if . . . Sure what at all would the likes of us be doing with all that great wealth! No, in troth! more harm nor good it would be doing us. The same as the poor man that found the bottle of whiskey and went and drank the whole of it, and fell into a boghole and was drowned, close a-by his own little place, God help us all! So what little Brigeen here is after saying is right enough. It's what I was thinking in meself the very minute she said the word . . . I'd not be agin they to get a little pair of boots or a thing of the kind when they'd be in the want of the like . . . but . . ."

Here even the flowing tongue from the County

Clare failed ; she stopped short and glanced from Ruth to Jack . . .

" Of course they can get anything in reason . . . "

" That's what I'm saying, sir . . but . . well, if you'd just keep the weight of the money the way you could be making use of it till . . till yourself and Miss Ruth there could be looking about you. . . Och take it, in the name of God ! "

Granny's eyes were bright with her seldom tears. Still there was a glint of fun in them too.

" Granny Molally ! You're ' not right ! ' " said Ruth. Her eyes were dancing too.

Jack drew her hand through his arm.

" Well, as you've guessed so much . . . Yes, Granny, we're going to be foolish and get married as soon as ever we can ' look about us,' and sooner too ! Where's the sense in waiting ! And you'll be having a good bit of the wedding cake. That is, if we have one. We think we'll have plenty of bread and butter anyway. And if we come short, we'll surely come to you. And now Dinny, come out from under that bed, and let's have a look at you. Ah, that new leg is light and handy, I see. Don't be afraid ! I'll settle for you to stop here . . . I know the people that manage that Home. Ungrateful young rascal, not to be contented there ! But . . with all that money . How about learning a trade ? "

" Cobbling does be great," said Granny ; " there's more with old boots wanting a *thiercen* upon them where there would be a hole, nor people able to pay for a new pair . . . eh, Dinny a-pet ? and could sit outside of a fine evening upon the doorstep above . . "

" What ought they to do ? " asked Ruth as slowly

she and Jack paced away. She spoke with the deference so sweet to the male mind.

"Do? They'll do what we all do; the thing we most want to do; when you boil it down you'll find that's right. What they really 'ought' to do is another thing; go back to the County Clare, if you ask me. Dinny's sickly; even Bride has the same look about her They 'ought' both to have lots of fresh air and milk. But they'd get sick to death of the loneliness in a week and begin longing for the pavements, even the very noise and dust of Dublin, bad smells, bad food and all the rest of it notwithstanding. And what are you going to do about it?"

"I wonder how often you've said just *that* to me!" said Ruth impatiently.

"Well, isn't it a puzzle?"

"I know that as well as you do."

"Better by far! For you've made the attempts to do something. . . They didn't all fail," he added.

"How kind of you! Faint praise indeed! I'd far rather be laughed at"

"Why, Ruth . . . !" said her lover, "ah, don't you know me better than that by this time"

There ensued the low replies, the happy laughter.

And they two strolled on, and into the Square gardens, over which a wonderful, a brooding beauty abides always.

And there they talked long of all they would do in the future that lay smiling and rosy before them; while the evening star rose and shone, mild, equable and aloof, over the various doorsteps that had in turn been haunted by Dinny.

